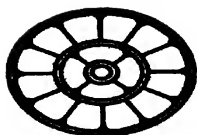


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THE MOTHER
CONVERSATIONS

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM
PONDICHERRY

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

- For some time in 1929, every Sunday the Mother used to meditate with a small group of Sadhaks, and later answer questions put by them. CONVERSATIONS is a transcript of fifteen of these weekly meetings. The Mother's words, spoken in English, were noted down in shorthand and later corrected by her and approved for publication; they were printed in 1931 for private circulation under the title *Conversations with the Mother*.

In 1940 these conversations were made available to the public, retitled *Words of the Mother*. Some other sayings of the Mother were added in this book and a short statement written by her in 1912 included as the Foreword: This collection was reprinted in 1943, 1946 and 1949.

In 1956 the sayings were omitted and only the Foreword and conversations reprinted. This edition is the fifth reprinting of that book, entitled CONVERSATIONS.

FOREWORD

(*Written in 1912*)

The general aim to be attained is the advent of a progressing universal harmony.

The means for attaining this aim, in regard to the earth, is the realisation of human unity through the awakening in all and the manifestation by all of the inner Divinity which is One.

In other words,—to create unity by founding the Kingdom of God which is within us all.

This, therefore, is the most useful work to be done :

(1) For each individually, to be conscious in himself of the Divine Presence and to identify himself with it.

(2) To individualise the states of being that were never till now conscious in man and, by that, to put the earth in connection with one or more of the fountains of universal force that are still sealed to it.

(3) To speak again to the world the eternal word under a new form adapted to its present mentality.

It will be the synthesis of all human knowledge.

(4) Collectively, to establish an ideal society in a propitious spot for the flowering of the new race, the race of the Sons of God.

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The terrestrial transformation and harmonisation can be brought about by two processes which, though opposite in appearance, must combine,—must act upon each other and complete each other :

(1) Individual transformation, an inner development leading

to the union with the Divine Presence.

(2) Social transformation, the establishment of an environment favourable to the flowering and growth of the individual.

Since the environment reacts upon the individual and, on the other hand, the value of the environment depends upon the value of the individual, the two works should proceed side by side. But this can be done only through division of labour, and that necessitates the formation of a group, hierarchised, if possible.

The action of the members of the group should be threefold :

(1) To realise in oneself the ideal to be attained : to become a perfect earthly representative of the first manifestation of the Unthinkable in all its modes, attributes and qualities.

(2) To preach this ideal by word, but, above all, by example, so as to find out all those who are ready to realise it in their turn and to become also announcers of liberation.

(3) To found a typic society or reorganise those that already exist.

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For each individual also there is a twofold labour to be done, simultaneously, each side of it helping and completing the other :

(1) An inner development, a progressive union with the Divine Light, sole condition in which man can be always in harmony with the great stream of universal life.

(2) An external action which everyone has to choose according to his capacities and personal preferences. He must find his own place, the place which he alone can occupy in the general concert, and he must give himself entirely to it, not forgetting that he is playing only one note in the terrestrial symphony and yet his note is indispensable to the harmony of the whole, and its value depends upon its justness.

I

"Will you say something to us about Yoga ?"

What do you want the Yoga for ? To get power ? To attain to peace and calm ? To serve humanity ?

None of these motives is sufficient to show that you are meant for the Path.

The question you are to answer is this : Do you want the Yoga for the sake of the Divine ? Is the Divine the supreme fact of your life, so much so that it is simply impossible for you to do without it ? Do you feel that your very *raison d'être* is the Divine and without it there is no meaning in your existence ? If so, then only can it be said that you have a call for the Path.

This is the first thing necessary—aspiration for the Divine.

The next thing you have to do is to tend it, to keep it always alert and awake and living. And for that what is required is concentration—concentration upon the Divine with a view to an integral and absolute consecration to its Will and Purpose.

Concentrate in the heart. Enter into it; go within and deep and far, as far as you can. Gather all the strings of your consciousness that are spread abroad, roll them up and take a plunge and sink down.

A fire is burning there, in the deep quietude of the heart. It is the divinity in you—your true being. Hear its voice, follow its dictates.

There are other centres of concentration, for example, one above the crown and another between the eye-brows. Each has its own efficacy and will give you a particular result. But the central being lies in the heart and from the heart proceed all central movements—all dynamism and urge for transformation and power of realisation.

"What is one to do to prepare oneself for the Yoga ?"

To be conscious, first of all. We are conscious of only an insignificant portion of our being; for the most part we are unconscious. It is this unconsciousness that keeps us down to our unregenerate nature and prevents change and transformation in it. It is through unconsciousness that the undivine forces enter into us and make us their slaves. You are to be conscious of yourself, you must awake to your nature and movements, you must know why and how you do things or feel or think them; you must understand your motives and impulses, the forces, hidden and apparent, that move you; in fact, you must, as it were, take to pieces the entire machinery of your being. Once you are conscious, it means that you can distinguish and sift things, you can see which are the forces that pull you down and which help you on. And when you know the right from the wrong, the true from the false, the divine from the undivine, you are to act strictly up to your knowledge; that is to say, resolutely reject one and accept the other. The duality will present itself at every step and at every step you will have to make your choice. You will have to be patient and persistent and vigilant—"sleepless", as the adepts say; you must always refuse to give any chance whatever to the undivine against the divine.

"Is the Yoga for the sake of humanity ?"

No, it is for the sake of Divinity. It is not the welfare of humanity that we seek but the manifestation of the Divine. We are here to work out the Divine Will, more truly, to be worked upon by the Divine Will so that we may be its instruments for the progressive incorporation of the Supreme and

the establishment of His reign upon earth. Only that portion of humanity which will respond to the Divine Call shall receive its Grace.

Whether humanity as a whole will be benefited, if not directly, at least, in an indirect way, will depend upon the condition of humanity itself. If one is to judge from the present conditions, there is not much hope. What is the attitude today of the average man—the representative humanity ? Does he not rise in anger and revolt directly he meets something that partakes of the genuinely divine ? Does he not feel that the Divine means the destruction of his cherished possessions ? Is he not continually yelling out the most categorical negative to everything that the Divine intends and wills ? Humanity will have to change much before it can hope to gain anything by the advent of the Divine.

“How is it that we have met ?”

We have all met in previous lives. Otherwise we would not have come together in this life. We are of one family and have worked through ages for the victory of the Divine and its manifestation upon earth.

II

"What are the dangers of Yoga ? Is it especially dangerous to the people of the West ? Someone has said that Yoga may be suitable for the East, but it has the effect of unbalancing the Western mind."

Yoga is not more dangerous to the people of the West than to those of the East. Everything depends upon the spirit with which you approach it. Yoga does become dangerous if you want it for your own sake, to serve a personal end. It is not dangerous, on the contrary, it is safety and security itself, if you go to it with a sense of its sacredness, always remembering that the aim is to find the Divine.

Dangers and difficulties come in when people take up Yoga, not for the sake of the Divine, but because they want to acquire power and under the guise of Yoga seek to satisfy some ambition. If you cannot get rid of ambition, do not touch the thing. It is fire that burns.

There are two paths of Yoga, one of *tapasyā* (discipline) and the other of surrender. The path of *tapasyā* is arduous. Here you rely solely upon yourself, you proceed by your own strength. You ascend and achieve according to the measure of your force.* There is always the danger of falling down. And once you fall, you lie broken in the abyss and there is hardly a remedy. The other path, the path of surrender, is safe and sure. It is here, however, that the Western people find their difficulty. They have been taught to fear and avoid all that threatens their personal independence. They have imbibed with their mothers' milk the sense of individuality. And surrender means giving up all that. In other words, you may follow, as Ramakrishna says, either the path of the baby monkey or that of the baby cat. The baby monkey holds to its

mother in order to be carried about and it must hold firm, otherwise if it loses its grip, it falls. On the other hand, the baby cat does not hold to its mother, but is held by the mother and has no fear nor responsibility; it has nothing to do but to let the mother hold it and cry *ma ma*.

If you take up this path of surrender fully and sincerely, there is no more danger or serious difficulty. The question is to be sincere. If you are not sincere, do not begin Yoga. If you were dealing in human affairs, then you could resort to deception; but in dealing with the Divine there is no possibility of deception anywhere. You can go on the Path safely when you are candid and open to the core and when your only end is to realise and attain the Divine and to be moved by the Divine.

There is another danger; it is in connection with the sex impulses. Yoga in its process of purification will lay bare and throw up all hidden impulses and desires in you. And you must learn not to hide things nor leave them aside, you have to face them and conquer and remould them. The first effect of Yoga, however, is to take away the mental control, and the hungers that lie dormant are suddenly set free, they rush up and invade the being. So long as this mental control has not been replaced by the Divine control, there is a period of transition when your sincerity and surrender will be put to the test. The strength of such impulses as those of sex lies usually in the fact that people take too much notice of them; they protest too vehemently and endeavour to control them by coercion, hold them within and sit upon them. But the more you think of a thing and say, "I don't want it, I don't want it," the more you are bound to it. What you should do is to keep the thing away from you, to dissociate from it, take as little notice of it as possible and, even if you happen to think of it, to remain indifferent and unconcerned.

The impulses and desires that come up by the pressure of

Yoga should be faced in a spirit of detachment and serenity, as something foreign to yourself or belonging to the outside world. They should be offered to the Divine, so that the Divine may take them up and transmute them.

If you have once opened yourself to the Divine, if the power of the Divine has once come down into you and yet you try to keep to the old forces, you prepare troubles and difficulties and dangers for yourself. You must be vigilant and see that you do not use the Divine as a cloak for the satisfaction of your desires. There are many self-appointed Masters, who do nothing but that. And then when you are off the straight path and when you have a little knowledge and not much power, it happens that you are seized by beings or entities of a certain type, you become blind instruments in their hands and are devoured by them in the end. Wherever there is pretence, there is danger; you cannot deceive God. Do you come to God saying, "I want union with you" and in your heart meaning "I want powers and enjoyments" ? Beware ! You are heading straight towards the brink of the precipice. And yet it is so easy to avoid all catastrophe. Become like a child, give yourself up to the Mother, let her carry you, and there is no more danger for you.

This does not mean that you have not to face other kinds of difficulties or that you have not to fight and conquer any obstacles at all. Surrender does not ensure a smooth and un-ruffled and continuous progression. The reason is that your being is not yet one, nor your surrender absolute and complete. Only a part of you surrenders; and today it is one part and the next day it is another. The whole purpose of the Yoga is to gather all the divergent parts together and forge them into an undivided unity. Till then you cannot hope to be without difficulties—difficulties, for example, like doubt or depression or hesitation. The whole world is full of the poison. You

take it in with every breath. If you exchange a few words with an undesirable man or even if such a man merely passes by you, you may catch the contagion from him. It is sufficient for you to come near a place where there is plague in order to be infected with its poison; you need not know at all that it is there. You can lose in a few minutes what it has taken you months to gain. So long as you belong to humanity and so long as you lead the ordinary life, it does not matter much if you mix with the people of the world; but if you want the divine life, you will have to be exceedingly careful about your company and your environment.

“What is the way to establish unity and homogeneity in our being ?”

Keep the will firm. Treat the recalcitrant parts as disobedient children. Act upon them constantly and patiently. Convince them of their error.

In the depths of your consciousness is the psychic being, the temple of the Divine within you. This is the centre round which should come about the unification of all these divergent parts, all these contradictory movements of your being. Once you have got the consciousness of the psychic being and its aspiration, these doubts and difficulties can be destroyed. It takes more or less time, but you will surely succeed in the end. Once you have turned to the Divine, saying, “I want to be yours,” and the Divine has said, “Yes,” the whole world cannot keep you from it. When the central being has made its surrender, the chief difficulty has disappeared. The outer being is like a crust. In ordinary people the crust is so hard and thick that they are not conscious of the Divine within them. If once, even for a moment only, the inner being has said, “I

gr \acute{e} at truth to teach to humanity and who wants many disciples and who feels uncomfortable when the disciples go away or who seizes on anybody that comes and tries to make him a disciple, is evidently following nothing but his ambition. You must be able, if you are ready to follow the Divine order, to take up whatever work you are given, even a stupendous work, and leave it the next day with the same quietness with which you took it up and not feel that the responsibility is yours. There should be no attachment—to any object or any mode of life. You must be absolutely free. If you want to have the true Yogic attitude, you must be able to accept everything that comes from the Divine and let it go easily and without regret. The attitude of the ascetic who says, “I want nothing” and the attitude of the man of the world who says, “I want this thing” are the same. The one may be as much attached to his renunciation as the other to his possession.

You must accept all things—and only those things—that come from the Divine. Because things can come from concealed desires. The desires work in the subconscious and bring things to you which, although you may not recognise them as such, nevertheless do not come from the Divine but from disguised desires.

You can easily know when a thing comes from the Divine. You feel free, you are at ease, you are in peace. But when something presents itself to you and you jump at it and cry out, “Oh, at last I have it,” then you can know for certain that it does not come from the Divine. Equanimity is the essential condition of union and communion with the Divine.

“Does not the Divine sometimes give what you desire?”

Certainly. There was a young man who wanted to do Yoga.

But he had a mean and cruel father who troubled him very much and tried to prevent him from doing it. He wished ardently to be free from the father's interference. Soon the father fell ill and very seriously; he was about to die. Whereupon the other side of the boy's nature rose up and he loudly bewailed the misfortune and cried, "Oh, my poor father is so ill ! It is such a sad thing. Alas, what shall I do ?" The father got well. The young man rejoiced and turned once more to Yoga. And the father also began again to oppose and torment him with redoubled violence. The son tore his hair in despair and cried, "Now my father stands in my way more than ever." The whole thing is to know exactly what one wants.

The Divine always brings with it perfect calm and peace. A certain class of 'Bhaktas', it is true, present generally a very different picture; they jump about and cry and laugh and sing, in a fit of devotion, as they say. But in reality such people do not live in the Divine. They live largely in the vital world.

You say that even Ramakrishna had periods of emotional excitement and would go about with hands uplifted, singing and dancing ? The truth of the matter is this. The movement in the inner being may be perfect; but it puts you in a certain condition of receptivity to forces that fill you with intense emotional excitement, if your external being is weak or untransformed. Where the external being offers resistance to the inner being or cannot hold the entirety of the Ananda, there is this confusion and anarchy in expression.

You must have a strong body and strong nerves. You must have a strong basis of equanimity in your external being. If you have this basis, you can contain a world of emotion and yet not have to scream it out. This does not mean that you cannot express your emotion, but you can express it in a beautiful harmonious way. To weep or scream or dance about is always a proof of weakness, either of the vital or the mental

or the physical nature; for on all these levels the activity is for self-satisfaction. One who dances and jumps and screams has the feeling that he is somehow very unusual in his excitement; and his vital nature takes great pleasure in that.

If you have to bear the pressure of the Divine descent, you must be very strong and powerful, otherwise you would be shaken to pieces. Some persons ask, "Why has not the Divine come yet?" Because you are not ready. If a little drop makes you sing and dance and scream, what would happen if the whole thing came down?

Therefore do we say to people who have not a strong and firm and capacious basis in the body and the vital and the mind, "Do not pull," meaning "do not try to pull at the forces of the Divine, but wait in peace and calmness." For they would not be able to bear the descent. But to those who possess the necessary basis and foundation we say, on the contrary, "Aspire and draw." For they would be able to receive and yet not be upset by the forces descending from the Divine.

"In the case of some persons who turn to the Divine it happens that every material prop or everything they are fond of is removed from their life. And if they love someone, he also is taken away."

It is a thing that does not happen to all. It happens to those that are called.

Whatever difference there is between the West and the East in relation to spiritual life lies not in the inner being or nature, which is an invariable and constant thing, but in the mental habits, in the modes of outer expression and presentation which are the result of education and environment and other external conditions. All people, whether occidental or oriental, are alike in their deepest feelings; they are different in their

way of thinking. Sincerity, for example, is a quality which is the same everywhere. Those who are sincere, to whichever nation they belong, are all sincere in the same way. Only the forms given to this sincerity vary. The mind works in different ways in different peoples, but the heart is the same everywhere; the heart is a much truer reality, and the differences belong to the superficial parts. As soon as you go deep enough, you meet something that is one in all. All meet in the Divine. The sun is the symbol of the Divine in the physical nature. Clouds may modify its appearance, but when they are no longer there, you see it is the same sun always and everywhere.

If you cannot feel one with somebody, it means you have not gone deep enough in your feeling.

III

"There is a common idea that visions are a sign of high spirituality. Is this true?"

Not necessarily. Moreover, to see is one thing but to understand and interpret what is seen is quite another thing and much more difficult. Generally, those who see are misled because they give the meaning or interpretation they wish to give according to their desires, hopes and prepossessions. And then, too, there are many different planes in which you can see. There is a mental seeing, a vital seeing, and there are some visions that are seen in a plane very close to the most material. The visions that belong to the last category appear in forms and symbols that seem to be absolutely material, so clear and real and tangible they are. And if you know how to interpret them you can have very exact indications of circumstances and of the inner condition of people.

Let us illustrate. Here is a vision that someone actually had. A road climbs up a steep and precipitous hillside, bathed in full bright sunlight. On the road a heavy coach drawn by six strong horses is proceeding with great difficulty; it is advancing slowly but steadily. Arrives a man who looks over the situation, takes his position behind the coach and begins to push it or tries to push it up the hill. Then someone comes who has knowledge and says to him, "Why do you labour in vain? Do you think your effort can have any effect? For you it is an impossible task. Even the horses find it difficult."

Now the clue to the meaning of the vision lies in the image of the six horses. Horses are symbols of power and the number six represents divine creation; so the six horses signify the powers of divine creation. The coach stands for realisation, for the thing that has to be realised, achieved, brought up to

the summit, to the height where dwells the Light. Although these powers of creation are divine, it is a hard labour even for them to consummate the realisation; for they have to work against heavy odds, against the whole downward pull of nature. Then comes in the human being in his arrogance and ignorance, with his small fund of mental powers and thinks that he is somebody and can do something. The best thing he can do is to step inside the coach, sit down comfortably and let the horses carry him.

Dreams are quite a different thing. They are more difficult to interpret, since each person has his own world of dream-imagery peculiar to himself. Of course, there are dreams that do not signify much, those that are connected with the most superficial and physical layer of consciousness, those that are the result of stray thoughts, random impressions, mechanical reactions or reflex activities. These have no regular or organised form and shape and meaning; they are hardly remembered and leave almost no trace in the consciousness. But even dreams that have a somewhat deeper origin are still obscure, since they are peculiarly personal, in this sense that they depend for their make-up almost entirely upon the experiences and idiosyncrasies of the individual. Visions also are made up of symbols that do not necessarily obtain universal currency. The symbols vary according to race and tradition and religion. One symbol may be peculiarly Christian, another peculiarly Hindu, a third may be common to all the East and a fourth only to the West. Dreams, on the other hand, are exclusively personal; they depend upon everyday occurrences and impressions. It is exceedingly difficult for one man to explain or interpret another's dream. Each man is like a closed circle to every other man. But everyone can study for himself his own dreams, unravel them and find out their meaning.

Now the procedure to deal with dreams and the dreamland.

First become conscious—conscious of your dreams. Observe the relation between them and the happenings of your waking hours. If you remember your night, you will be able to trace back very often the condition of your day to the condition of your night. In sleep some action or other is always going on in your mental or vital or other plane; things happen there and they govern your waking consciousness. For instance, some are very anxious to perfect themselves and make a great effort during the day. They go to sleep and, when they rise the next day, they find no trace of the gains of their previous day's effort; they have to go over the same ground once again. This means that the effort and whatever achievement there was belonged to the more superficial or wakeful parts of the being, but there were deeper and dormant parts that were not touched. In sleep you fell into the grip of these unconscious regions and they opened and swallowed all that you had laboriously built up in your conscious hours.

Be conscious ! Be conscious of the night as well as of the day. First you have to get consciousness, afterwards, control. You who remember your dreams may have had this experience that, even while dreaming, you knew it was a dream; you knew that it was an experience that did not belong to the material world. When once you know, you can act there in the same way as in the material world; even in the dreaming, you can exercise your conscious will and change the whole course of your dream-experience.

And as you become more and more conscious, you will begin to have the same control over your being at night as you have in the day, perhaps even more. For at night you are free, at least partially, from slavery to the mechanism of the body. The control over the processes of the body-consciousness is more difficult, since they are more rigid, less amenable to change than are the mental or the vital processes.

In the night the mental and vital, especially the vital, are very active. During the day they are under check, the physical consciousness automatically represses their free play and expression. In sleep this check is removed and they come out with their natural and free movements.

"What is the nature of dreamless sleep"?

Generally, when you have what you call dreamless sleep, it is one of two things; either you do not remember what you dreamt or you fell into absolute unconsciousness which is almost death—a taste of death. But there is the possibility of a sleep in which you enter into an absolute silence, immobility and peace in all parts of your being and your consciousness merges into Sachchidananda. You can hardly call it sleep, for it is extremely conscious. In that condition you may remain for a few minutes, but these few minutes give you more rest and refreshment than hours of ordinary sleep. You cannot have it by chance; it requires a long training.

"How is it that in dreams one meets and knows people whom one meets and knows afterwards in the outer world?"

It is because of the affinities that draw certain people together, affinities in the mental or the vital world. People often meet in these planes before they meet upon earth. They may join there, speak to each other and have all the relations you can have upon earth. Some know of these relationships, some do not know. Some, as are indeed most, are unconscious of the inner being and the inner intercourse, and yet it will happen that, when they meet the new face in the outer world,

they find it somehow very familiar, quite well-known.

"Are there no false visions?"

There are what in appearance are false visions. There are, for instance, hundreds or thousands of people who say that they have seen the Christ. Of that number those who have actually seen Him are perhaps less than a dozen, and even with them there is much to say about what they have seen. What the others saw may be an emanation; or it may be a thought or even an image remembered by the mind. There are, too, those who are strong believers in the Christ and have had a vision of some Force or Being or some remembered image that is very luminous and makes upon them a strong impression. They have seen something which they feel belongs to another world, to a supernatural order, and it has created in them an emotion of fear, awe or joy; and as they believe in the Christ, they can think of nothing else and say it is He. But the same vision or experience if it comes to one who believes in the Hindu, the Mahomedan or some other religion, will take a different name and form. The thing seen or experienced may be fundamentally the same, but it is formulated differently according to the different make-up of the apprehending mind. It is only those that can go beyond beliefs and faiths and myths and traditions who are able to say what it really is; but these are few, very few. You must be free from every mental construction, you must divest yourself of all that is merely local or temporal, before you can know what you have seen.

Spiritual experience means the contact with the Divine in oneself (or without, which comes to the same thing in that domain). And it is an experience identical everywhere in all countries, among all peoples and even in all ages. If you meet

the Divine, you meet it always and everywhere in the same way. Difference comes in because between the experience and its formulation there is almost an abyss. Directly you have spiritual experience, which takes place always in the inner consciousness, it is translated into your external consciousness and defined there in one way or another according to your education, your faith, your mental predisposition. There is only one truth, one reality; but the forms through which it may be expressed are many.

“What was the nature of Jeanne d’Arc’s vision?”

Jeanne d’Arc was evidently in relation with some entities belonging to what we call the world of the Gods (or as the Catholics say, the world of the Saints, though it is not quite the same). The beings she saw she called archangels. These beings belong to the intermediate world between the higher mind and the supramental, the world that Sri Aurobindo calls the Overmind. It is the world of the creators, the “Formateurs”.

The two beings who were always appearing and speaking to Jeanne d’Arc would, if seen by an Indian, have a quite different appearance; for when one sees, one projects the forms of one’s mind. To what you see you give the form of that which you expect to see. If the same being appeared simultaneously in a group where there were Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Shintoists, it would be named by absolutely different names. Each would say, in reference to the appearance of the being, that he is like this or like that, all differing and yet it would be one and the same manifestation. You have the vision of one in India whom you call the Divine Mother, the Catholics say it is the Virgin Mary, and the Japanese call it Kwannon, the Goddess of Mercy, and others would give other names. It is

the same Force, the same Power, but the images made of it are different in different faiths.

“What is the place of training or discipline in surrender? If one surrenders, can he not be without discipline? Does not discipline sometimes hamper?”

May be. But a distinction must be made between a method of development or discipline and a willed action. Discipline is different; I am speaking of willed action. If you surrender you have to give up effort, but that does not mean that you have to abandon also all willed action. On the contrary, you can hasten the realisation by lending your will to the Divine will. That too is surrender in another form.

What is required of you is not a passive surrender, in which you become like a block, but to put your will at the disposal of the Divine will.

“But how can one do this before the union has been effected?”

You have a will and you can offer that will. Take the example of becoming conscious of your nights. If you take the attitude of passive surrender, you would say, “When it is the Divine will that I should become conscious, then I shall become conscious.” On the other hand, if you offer your will to the Divine, you begin to will, you say, “I will become conscious of my nights.” You have the will that it should be done; you do not sit down idle and wait. The surrender comes in when you take the attitude that says, “I give my will to the Divine. I intensely want to become conscious of my nights, I have not the knowledge, let the Divine will work it out for me.” Your

will must continue to act steadily, not in the way of choosing a particular action or demanding a particular object, but as an ardent aspiration concentrated upon the end to be achieved. This is the first step. If you are vigilant, if your attention is alert, you will certainly receive something in the form of an inspiration of what is to be done and that you must forthwith proceed to do. Only you must remember that to surrender is to accept whatever is the result of your action, though the result may be quite different from what you expect. On the other hand, if your surrender is passive, you will do nothing and try nothing; you will simply go to sleep and wait for a miracle.

Now to know whether your will or desire is in agreement with the Divine Will or not, you must look and see whether you have an answer or have no answer, whether you feel supported or contradicted, not by the mind or the vital or the body, but by that something which is always there deep in the inner being, in your heart.

“Is not an increasing effort of meditation needed and is it not true that the more hours you meditate the greater progress you make?”

The number of hours spent in meditation is no proof of spiritual progress. It is a proof of your progress when you no longer have to make an effort to meditate. Then you have rather to make an effort to stop meditating : it becomes difficult to stop meditation, difficult to stop thinking of the Divine, difficult to come down to the ordinary consciousness. Then you are sure of progress, then you have made real progress when concentration in the Divine is the necessity of your life, when you cannot do without it, when it continues naturally

from morning to night whatever you may be engaged in doing. Whether you sit down to meditation or go about and do things and work, what is required of you is consciousness; that is the one need,—to be constantly conscious of the Divine.

“But is not to sit down to meditation an indispensable discipline, and does it not give a more intense and concentrated union with the Divine?”

That may be. But a discipline in itself is not what we are seeking. What we are seeking is to be concentrated on the Divine in all that we do, at all times, in all our acts and in every movement. There are some here who have been told to meditate; but also there are others who have not been asked to do any meditation at all. But it must not be thought that they are not progressing. They too follow a discipline, but it is of another nature. To work, to act with devotion and an inner consecration is also a spiritual discipline. The final aim is to be in constant union with the Divine, not only in meditation but in all circumstances and in all the active life.

There are some who, when they are sitting in meditation, get into a state which they think very fine and delightful. They sit self-complacent in it and forget the world; but if they are disturbed, they come out of it angry and restless, because their meditation was interrupted. This is not a sign of spiritual progress or discipline. There are some people who act and seem to feel as if their meditation were a debt they have to pay to the Divine; they are like men who go to Church once a week and think they have paid what they owe to God.

If you need to make an effort to go into meditation, you are still very far from being able to live the spiritual life. When it takes an effort to come out of it, then indeed your meditation

can be an indication that you are in the spiritual life.

There are disciplines such as *Hatha Yoga* and *Raja Yoga* that one can practise and yet have nothing to do with the spiritual life; the former arrives mostly at body control, the latter at mind control. But to enter the spiritual life means to take a plunge into the Divine, as you would jump into the sea. And that is not the end but the very beginning; for after you have taken the plunge, you must learn to live in the Divine. How are you to do it ? You have simply to jump straight in and not to think, "Where shall I fall ? What will happen to me ?" It is the hesitation of your mind that prevents you. You must simply let yourself go. If you wish to dive into the sea and are thinking all the time, "Ah, but there may be a stone here or a stone there," you cannot dive.

"But you see the sea and so you can jump straight into it. But how are you to jump into the spiritual life ?"

Of course, you must have had some glimpse of the Divine Reality, as you must see the sea and know something of it before you can jump into it. That glimpse is usually the awakening of the psychic consciousness. But some realisation you must have—a strong mental or vital, if not a deep psychic or integral contact. You must have felt strongly the Divine Presence in or about you; you must have felt the breath of the Divine world. And you must have felt too as a suffocating pressure the opposite breath of the ordinary world, drawing you to an endeavour to come out of that oppressive atmosphere. If you have that, then you have only to seek refuge unreservedly in the Divine Reality and live in its help and protection, in it alone. What you may have done in the course of your ordinary life only partially or in some parts of your being or at times

and on occasions, you must do completely and for good. That is the plunge you have to take, and unless you do it, you may do Yoga for years and yet know nothing of a true spiritual living. Take the whole and entire plunge and you will be free from this outer confusion and get the true experience of the spiritual life.

IV

"It has been said that in order to progress in Yoga one must offer up everything to the Divine, even every little thing that one has or does in life. What is precisely the meaning of that?"

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Yoga means union with the Divine, and the union is effected through offering—it is founded on the offering of yourself to the Divine. In the beginning you start by making this offering in a general way, as though once for all; you say, "I am the servant of the Divine; my life is given absolutely to the Divine; all my efforts are for the realisation of the Divine Life." But that is only the first step; for this is not sufficient. When the resolution has been taken, when you have decided that the whole of your life shall be given to the Divine, you have still at every moment to remember it and carry it out in all the details of your existence. You must feel at every step that you belong to the Divine; you must have the constant experience that, in whatever you think or do, it is always the Divine Consciousness that is acting through you. You have no longer anything that you can call your own; you feel everything as coming from the Divine, and you have to offer it back to its source. When you can realise that, then even the smallest thing to which you do not usually pay much attention or care, ceases to be trivial and insignificant; it becomes full of meaning and it opens up a vast horizon beyond.

This is how you have to do to carry out your general offering in detailed offerings. Live constantly in the presence of the Divine; live in the feeling that it is this presence which moves you and is doing everything you do. Offer all your movements to it, not only every mental action, every thought and feeling but even the most ordinary and external actions such as eating; when you eat, you must feel that it is the Divine who is eating

through you. When you can thus gather all your movements into the One Life, then you have in you unity instead of division. No longer is one part of your nature given to the Divine, while the rest remains in its ordinary ways, engrossed in ordinary things; your entire life is taken up, an integral transformation is gradually realised in you.

In the integral Yoga, the integral life down even to the smallest detail has to be transformed, to be divinised. There is nothing here that is insignificant, nothing that is indifferent. You cannot say, "When I am meditating, reading philosophy or listening to these conversations I will be in this condition of an opening towards the Light and a call for it, but when I go out to walk or see friends I can allow myself to forget all about it." To persist in this attitude means that you will remain untransformed and never have the true union; always you will be divided; you will have at best only glimpses of this greater life. For although certain experiences and realisations may come to you in meditation or in your inner consciousness, your body and your outer life will remain unchanged. An inner illumination that does not take any note of the body and the outer life, is of no great use; for it leaves the world as it is. This is what has continually happened till now. Even those who had a very great and powerful realisation withdrew from the world to live undisturbed in inner quiet and peace; the world was left to its ways, and misery and stupidity, Death and Ignorance continued, unaffected, their reign on this material plane of existence. For those who thus withdraw, it may be pleasant to escape from this turmoil, to run away from the difficulty and to find for themselves a happy condition elsewhere; but they leave the world and life uncorrected and untransformed; and their own outer consciousness too they leave unchanged and their bodies as unregenerate as ever. Coming back to the physical world, they are likely to be worse there

than even ordinary people; for they have lost the mastery over material things, and their dealing with physical life is likely to be slovenly and helpless in its movements and at the mercy of every passing force.

An ideal of this kind may be good for those who want it, but it is not our Yoga. For we want the divine conquest of this world, the conquest of all its movements and the realisation of the Divine here. But if we want the Divine to reign here we must give all we have and are and do here to the Divine. It will not do to think that anything is unimportant or that the external life and its necessities are no part of the Divine life. If we do, we shall remain where we have always been and there will be no conquest of the external world; nothing abiding there will have been done.

"Do people who have advanced very far come back to this plane?"

Yes; if there is a will in them to change this plane, then the more advanced they are, the surer they are to come back. And as for those who have the will of running away, even they, when they go over to the other side, may find that the flight was not of much use after all. •

"Do many remember that they have passed over and are back again?"

When you reach a certain state of consciousness, you remember. It is not so difficult to touch this state partially for a short time; in deep meditation, in a dream or a vision one may have the feeling or the impression that he has lived this life

before, had this realisation, known these truths. But this is not a full realisation; to come to that, one must have attained to a permanent consciousness within us which is everlasting and holds together all our existences in past or present or future time.

"When we are concentrated in mental movements or intellectual pursuits, why do we sometimes forget or lose touch with the Divine?"

You lose it because your consciousness is still divided. The Divine has not settled into your mind; you are not wholly consecrated to the Divine Life. Otherwise you could concentrate to any extent upon such things and still you would have the sense of being helped and supported by the Divine.

In all pursuits, intellectual or active, your one motto should be, "Remember and Offer". Let whatever you do be done as an offering to the Divine. And this too will be an excellent discipline for you; it will prevent you from doing many foolish and useless things.

"Often in the beginning of the action this can be done; but as one gets engrossed in the work, one forgets. How is one to remember?"

The condition to be aimed at, the real achievement of Yoga, the final perfection and attainment, for which all else is only a preparation, is a consciousness in which it is impossible to do anything without the Divine; for then, if you are without the Divine, the very source of your action disappears; knowledge, power, all are gone. But so long as you feel that the

powers you use are your own, you will not miss the Divine support.

In the beginning of the Yoga you are apt to forget the Divine very often. But by constant aspiration you increase your remembrance and you diminish the forgetfulness. But this should not be done as a severe discipline or a duty; it must be a movement of love and joy. Then very soon a stage will come when, if you do not feel the presence of the Divine at every moment and whatever you are doing, you feel at once lonely and sad and miserable.

Whenever you find that you can do something without feeling the presence of the Divine and yet be perfectly comfortable, you must understand that you are not consecrated in that part of your being. That is the way of the ordinary humanity which does not feel any need of the Divine. But for a seeker of the Divine Life it is very different. And when you have entirely realised unity with the Divine, then, if the Divine were only for a second to withdraw from you, you would simply drop dead; for the Divine is now the Life of your life, your whole existence, your single and complete support. If the Divine is not there, nothing is left.

"In the initial stages of Yoga, is it well for the Sadhaka to read ordinary books?"

You can read sacred books and yet be far away from the Divine; and you can read the most stupid productions and be in touch with the Divine. It is not possible to get an idea of what the transformed consciousness and its movements are until you have had a taste of the transformation. There is a way of consciousness in union with the Divine in which you can enjoy all you read, as you can all you observe, even the

most indifferent books or the most uninteresting things. You can hear poor music, even music from which one would like to run away, and yet you can, not for its outward self but because of what is behind, enjoy it. You do not lose the distinction between good music and bad music, but you pass through either into that which it expresses. For there is nothing in the world which has not its ultimate truth and support in the Divine. And if you are not stopped by the appearance, physical or moral or aesthetic, but get behind and are in touch with the Spirit, the divine soul in things, you can reach beauty and delight even through what affects the ordinary sense only as something poor, painful or discordant.

"Can it be said in justification of one's past that whatever has happened in one's life had to happen?"

Obviously, what has happened had to happen; it would not have been, if it had not been intended. Even the mistakes that we have committed and the adversities that fell upon us had to be, because there was some necessity in them, some utility for our lives. But in truth these things cannot be explained mentally and should not be. For all that happened was necessary, not for any mental reason, but to lead us to something beyond what the mind imagines. But is there any need to explain after all? The whole universe explains everything at every moment and a particular thing happens because the whole universe is what it is. But this does not mean that we are bound over to a blind acquiescence in Nature's inexorable law. You can accept the past as a settled fact and perceive the necessity in it, and still you can use the experience it gave you to build up the power consciously to guide and shape your present and your future.

“Is the time also of an occurrence arranged in the Divine plan of things ?”

All depends upon the plane from which one sees and speaks. There is a plane of divine consciousness in which all is known absolutely, and the whole plan of things foreseen and predetermined. That way of seeing lives in the highest reaches of the Supramental; it is the Supreme's own vision. But when we do not possess that consciousness, it is useless to speak in terms that hold good only in that region and are not our present effective way of seeing things. For at a lower level of consciousness nothing is realised or fixed beforehand; all is in the process of making. Here there are no settled facts, there is only the play of possibilities; out of the clash of possibilities is realised the thing that has to happen. On this plane we can choose and select; we can refuse one possibility and accept another; we can follow one path, turn away from another. And that we can do, even though what is actually happening may have been foreseen and predetermined in a higher plane.

The Supreme Consciousness knows everything beforehand, because everything is realised there in her eternity. But for the sake of her play and in order to carry out actually on the physical plane what is foreordained in her own supreme self, she moves here upon earth as if she did not know the whole story; she works as if it was a new and untried thread that she was weaving. It is this apparent forgetfulness of her own foreknowledge in the higher consciousness that gives to the individual in the active life of the world his sense of freedom and independence and initiative. These things in him are her pragmatic tools or devices, and it is through this machinery that the movements and issues planned and foreseen elsewhere are realised here.

It may help you to understand if you take the example of

an actor. An actor knows the whole part he has to play; he has in his mind the exact sequence of what is to happen on the stage. But when he is on the stage, he has to appear as if he did not know anything; he has to feel and act as if he were experiencing all these things for the first time, as if it was an entirely new world with all its chance events and surprises that was unrolling before his eyes.

“Is there then no real freedom? Is everything absolutely determined, even your freedom, and is fatalism the highest secret?”

Freedom and fatality, liberty and determinism are truths that obtain on different levels of consciousness. It is ignorance that makes the mind put the two on the same level and pit one against the other. Consciousness is not a single uniform reality, it is complex; it is not something like a flat plain, it is multidimensional. On the highest height is the Supreme and in the lowest depth is matter; and there is an infinite gradation of levels of consciousness between this lowest depth and the highest height.

In the plane of matter and on the level of the ordinary consciousness you are bound hand and foot. A slave to the mechanism of Nature, you are tied to the chain of Karma, and there, in that chain, whatever happens is rigorously the consequence of what has been done before. There is an illusion of independent movement, but in fact you repeat what all others do, you echo Nature's world-movements, you revolve helplessly on the crushing wheel of her cosmic machine.

But it need not be so. You can shift your place if you will; instead of being below, crushed in the machinery or moved like a puppet, you can rise and look from above and by changing your consciousness you can even get hold of some handle

to move apparently inevitable circumstances and change fixed conditions. Once you draw yourself up out of the whirlpool and stand high above, you see you are free. Free from all compulsions, not only you are no longer a passive instrument, but you become an active agent. You are not only not bound by the consequences of your action, but you can even change the consequences. Once you see the play of forces, once you raise yourself to a plane of consciousness where lie the origins of forces and identify yourself with these dynamic sources, you belong no longer to what is moved but to that which moves.

This precisely is the aim of Yoga,—to get out of the cycle of Karma into a divine movement. By Yoga you leave the mechanical round of Nature in which you are an ignorant slave, a helpless and miserable tool, and rise into another plane where you become a conscious participant and a dynamic agent in the working out of a higher Destiny. This movement of the consciousness follows a double line. First of all there is an ascension; you raise yourself out of the level of material consciousness into superior ranges. But this ascension of the lower into the higher calls a descent of the higher into the lower. When you rise above the earth, you bring down too upon earth something of the above,—some light, some power that transforms or tends to transform its old nature. And then these things that were distinct, disconnected and disparate from each other—the higher in you and the lower, the inner and the outer strata of your being and consciousness—meet and are slowly joined together and gradually they fuse into one truth, one harmony.

It is in this way that what are called miracles happen. The world is made up of innumerable planes of consciousness and each has its own distinct laws; the laws of one plane do not hold good for another. A miracle is nothing but a sudden

descent, a bursting forth of another consciousness and its powers—most often it is the powers of the vital—into this plane of matter. There is a precipitation, upon the material mechanism, of the mechanism of a higher plane. It is as though a lightning flash tore through the cloud of our ordinary consciousness and poured into it other forces, other movements and sequences. The result we call a miracle, because we see a sudden alteration, an abrupt interference with the natural laws of our own ordinary range, but the reason and order of it we do not know or see, because the source of the miracle lies in another plane. Such incursions of the worlds beyond into our world of matter are not very uncommon, they are even a constant phenomenon, and if we have eyes and know how to observe we can see miracles in abundance. Especially must they be constant among those who are endeavouring to bring down the higher reaches into the earth-consciousness below.

“Has creation a definite aim? Is there something like a final end to which it is moving?”

No, the universe is a movement that is eternally unrolling itself. There is nothing which you can fix upon as *the* end and one aim. But for the sake of action we have to section the movement, which is itself unending, and to say that this or that is the goal, for in action we need something upon which we can fix our aim. In a picture you need a definite scheme of composition and colour; you have to set a limit, to put the whole thing within a fixed framework; but the limit is illusory, the frame is a mere convention. There is a constant continuation of the picture that stretches beyond any particular frame, and each continuation can be drawn in the same conditions in an un-

ending series of frames. Our aim is this or that, we say, but we know that it is only the beginning of another aim beyond it, and that in its turn leads to yet another; the series develops always and never stops.

V

“What is the proper function of the intellect? Is it a help or a hindrance to Sadhana?”

Whether the intellect is a help or a hindrance depends upon the person and upon the way in which it is used. There is a true movement of the intellect and there is a wrong movement; one helps, the other hinders. The intellect that believes too much in its own importance and wants satisfaction for its own sake, is an obstacle to the higher realisation.

But this is true not in any special sense or for the intellect alone, but generally and of other faculties as well. For example, people do not regard an all-engrossing satisfaction of the vital desires or the animal appetites as a virtue; the moral sense is accepted as a mentor to tell one the bounds that one may not transgress. It is only in his intellectual activities that man thinks he can do without any such mentor or censor !

Any part of the being that keeps to its proper place and plays its appointed role is helpful; but directly it steps beyond its sphere, it becomes twisted and perverted and therefore false. A power has the right movement when it is set into activity for the Divine purpose; it has the wrong movement when it is set into activity for its own satisfaction.

The intellect, in its true nature, is an instrument of expression and action. It is something like an intermediary between the true knowledge, whose seat is in the higher regions above the mind, and realisation here below. The intellect, or generally speaking, the mind gives the form; the vital puts in the dynamism and life-power; the material comes in last and embodies.

"How is one to meet adverse forces—that are invisible and yet quite living and tangible?"

A great deal depends upon the stage of development of your consciousness. At the beginning, if you have no special occult knowledge and power, the best you can do is to keep as quiet and peaceful as possible. If the attack takes the form of adverse suggestions try quietly to push them away, as you would some material object. The quieter you are, the stronger you become. The firm basis of all spiritual power is equanimity. You must not allow anything to disturb your poise : you can then resist every kind of attack. If, besides, you possess sufficient discernment and can see and catch the evil suggestions as they come to you, it becomes all the more easy for you to push them away; but sometimes they come unnoticed, and then it is more difficult to fight them. When that happens, you must sit quiet and call down peace and a deep inner quietness. Hold yourself firm and call with confidence and faith : if your aspiration is pure and steady, you are sure to receive help.

Attacks from adverse forces are inevitable : you have to take them as tests on your way and go courageously through the ordeal. The struggle may be hard, but when you come out of it, you have gained something, you have advanced a step. There is even a necessity for the existence of the hostile forces. They make your determination stronger, your aspiration clearer.

It is true, however, that they exist because you gave them reason to exist. So long as there is something in you which answers to them, their intervention is perfectly legitimate. If nothing in you responded, if they had no hold upon any part of your nature, they would retire and leave you. In any case, they need not stop or hamper your spiritual progress.

The only way to fail in your battle with the hostile forces is not to have a true confidence in the Divine help. Sincerity in the aspiration always brings down the required succour. A quiet call, a conviction that in this ascension towards the realisation you are never walking all alone and a faith that whenever help is needed it is there, will lead you through, easily and securely.

“Do these hostile forces generally come from outside or inside?”

If you think or feel that they come from inside, you have possibly opened yourself to them and they have settled in you unnoticed. The true nature of things is one of harmony; but there is a distortion in certain worlds that brings in perversion and hostility. If you have a strong affinity for these worlds of distortion, you can become friends with the beings that are there and answer fully to them. That happens, but it is not a very happy condition. The consciousness is at once blinded and you cannot distinguish the true from the false, you cannot even tell what is a lie and what is not.

In any case, when an attack comes the wisest attitude is to consider that it comes from outside and to say, “This is not myself and I will have nothing to do with it.” You have to deal in the same way with all lower impulses and desires and all doubts and questionings in the mind. If you identify yourself with them, the difficulty in fighting them becomes all the greater; for then you have the feeling that you are facing the never easy task of overcoming your own nature. But once you are able to say, “No, this is not myself, I will have nothing to do with it,” it becomes much easier to disperse them.

"Where can the line be drawn between the inside and the outside ?"

The line is very flexible; it can be as near to you and as far from you as you will. You may take everything upon yourself and feel it as a part and parcel of your real self; or you may throw it away as you would a bit of hair or nail without being touched at all.

There have been religions whose followers would not part even with a bit of hair or nail, fearing that they would lose thereby something of their personality. Those who are capable of extending the consciousness as wide as the world, become the world; but those who are shut up in their little bodies and limited feelings stop at those limits; their bodies and their petty feelings are to them their whole self.

"Can mere faith create all, conquer all ?"

Yes, but it must be an integral faith and it must be absolute. And it must be of the right kind, not merely a force of mental thought or will, but something more and deeper. The will put forth by the mind sets up opposite reactions and creates a resistance. You must have heard something of the method of Coué in healing diseases. He knew some secret of this power and utilised it with considerable effect; but he called it imagination and his method gave the faith he called up too mental a form. Mental faith is not sufficient; it must be completed and enforced by a vital and even a physical faith, a faith of the body. If you can create in yourself an integral force of this kind in all your being, then nothing can resist it; but you must reach down to the most subconscious, you must fix the faith in the very cells of the body. There is, for instance, now

abroad the beginning of a knowledge among the scientists that death is not a necessity. But the whole of humanity believes firmly in death; it is, one might say, a general human suggestion based on a long unchanging experience. If this belief could be cast out first from the conscious mind, then from the vital nature and the subconscious physical layers, death would no longer be inevitable.

"But it is not only in the mind of man that this idea of death exists. The animal creation knew it before him."

Death as a fact has been attached to all life upon earth; but man understands it in a different sense from the meaning Nature originally put into it. In man and in the animals that are nearest to his level, the necessity of death has taken a special form and significance to their consciousness; but the subconscious knowledge in this lower Nature which supports it is a feeling of the necessity of renewal and change and transformation.

It was the conditions of matter upon earth that made death indispensable. The whole sense of the evolution of Matter has been a growth from a first state of unconsciousness to an increasing consciousness. And in this process of growth dissolution of forms became an inevitable necessity, as things actually took place. For a fixed form was needed in order that the organised individual consciousness might have a stable support. And yet it is the fixity of the form that made death inevitable. Matter had to assume forms; individualisation and the concrete embodiment of life-forces or consciousness-forces were impossible without it and without these there would have been lacking the first conditions of organised existence on the plane of matter. But a definite and concrete formation contracts

the tendency to become at once rigid and hard and petrified. The individual form persisted as a too binding mould; it cannot follow the movements of the forces; it cannot change in harmony with the progressive change in the universal dynamism; it cannot meet continually Nature's demand or keep pace with her; it gets out of the current. At a certain point of this growing disparity and disharmony between the form and the force that presses upon it, a complete dissolution of the form is unavoidable. A new form must be created; a new harmony and parity made possible. This is the true significance of death and this is its use in Nature. But if the form can become more quick and pliant and the cells of the body can be awakened to change with the changing consciousness, there would be no need of a drastic dissolution, death would be no longer inevitable.

"Someone has said that disasters and catastrophes in Nature, earthquake and deluge and the sinking of continents, are the consequence of a discordant and sinful humanity and with the progress and development of the human race a corresponding change will come about in physical Nature. How far is this true?"

Perhaps the truth is rather that it is one and the same movement of consciousness that expresses itself in a Nature ridden with calamities and catastrophes and in a disharmonious humanity. The two things are not cause and effect, but stand on the same level. Above them there is a consciousness which is seeking for manifestation and embodiment upon earth, and in its descent towards matter it meets everywhere the same resistance, in man and in physical Nature. All the disorder and disharmony that we see upon earth is the result of this resistance. Calamity and catastrophe, conflict and violence,

obscurity and ignorance—all ills come from the same source. Man is not the cause of external Nature, nor external Nature the cause of man, but both depend on the same one thing that is behind them and greater, and both are part of a perpetual and progressive movement of the material world to express it.

Now if there is awakened somewhere upon earth a receptivity and openness sufficient to bring down in its purity something of the Divine consciousness, this descent and manifestation in matter can change not only the inner life, but the material conditions also, the physical expression in man and Nature. This descent does not depend for its possibility upon the condition of humanity as a whole. If we had to wait for the mass of humanity to reach a state of harmony, unity and aspiration, strong enough to bring down the Light and change the material conditions and the movement of Nature, there would be little hope. But there is a possibility that an individual or a small group or limited number may achieve the descent. It is not quantity or extension that matters. One drop of the Divine Consciousness entering into the consciousness of the earth could change everything here.

It is the mystery of the contact and fusion of the higher and the lower planes of consciousness that is the great secret, the hidden key. Always it has a transforming force; only here it would be on a larger scale and reach a higher degree. If there is someone on earth who is capable of coming consciously into contact with a plane that has not yet been manifested here and if by rising into it in his consciousness he can make that plane and the material meet and harmonise, then the great decisive movement of Nature's yet unrealised transformation can take place. A new power will descend and change the conditions of life upon earth.

Even as it is, every time that a great soul has come and revealed some light of truth or brought down upon earth a new

force, the conditions on earth have changed, though not exactly in the way that had been hoped and expected. For example, one who has attained to a certain plane of knowledge and consciousness and spiritual experience, has come and said, "I am bringing to you liberation" or "I am bringing to you peace". Those who were around him believed, perhaps, that he was bringing it in a material way; when they found it was not as they thought, they could not understand what he had done. What he brought was a change in the consciousness, a peace of a kind unknown till then or a capacity for liberation that was not there before. But these movements belonged to the inner life and brought no tangible external change in the world. Perhaps the intention to change the world externally was not there; perhaps there was not the necessary knowledge; but still something was effected by these pioneers.

In spite of all adverse appearances, it may well be that earth has been preparing for a certain realisation by steps and stages. There has been a change in civilisation and a change in nature. If it is not apparent, it is because we see from an external point of view and because matter and its difficulties have never been seriously or thoroughly dealt with up till now. Still internally there has been a progress; in the inner consciousness there have been descents of the Light. But as to any realisation in matter, it is difficult to say anything, because we do not exactly know what might have happened there.

There have been in the long past great and beautiful civilisations, perhaps as advanced materially as ours. Looked at from a certain standpoint the most modern might seem to be only a repetition of the most ancient cultures, and yet one cannot say that there has been no progress anywhere. An inner progress at least has been achieved and a greater readiness to respond to the higher consciousness has been born into the

material parts. It has been necessary to do over and over again the same things, because what was attempted was never sufficiently done; but each time it has come nearer to being adequately done. When we practise an exercise over and over again we seem to be only repeating the same thing always, but still the accumulative result is some effective change.

The mistake is to look at these things through the dimensions of the human consciousness, for so seen these deep and vast movements seem inexplicable. It is dangerous to try to explain or understand them with the limited mental intelligence. That is the reason why philosophy has always failed to unveil the secret of things; it is because it has tried to fit the universe into the size of the human mind.

"How many of us remember former lives?"

In all, in some part of our consciousness, there is a remembrance. But this is a dangerous subject, because the human mind is too fond of romance. As soon as it comes to know something of this truth of rebirth, it wants to build up beautiful stories around it. Many people would tell you wonderful tales of how the world was built and how it will proceed in the future, how and where you were born in the past and what you will be hereafter, the lives you have lived and the lives you will still live. All this has nothing to do with spiritual life. The true remembrance of past births may indeed be part of an integral knowledge; but it cannot be got by that way of imaginative fancies. If it is on one side an objective knowledge, on the other it depends largely on personal and subjective experience, and here there is much chance of invention, distortion or false building. To reach the truth of these things, your experiencing consciousness must be pure and limpid, free from

any mental interference or any vital interference, liberated from your personal notions and feelings and from your mind's habit of interpreting or explaining in its own way. An experience of past lives may be true, but between what you have seen and your mind's explanation or construction about it there is bound to be always a great gulf. It is only when you can rise above human feelings and get back from your mind, that you can reach the truth.

VI

"There are some human beings who are like vampires. What are they and why are they like that?"

They are not human; there is only a human form or appearance. They are incarnations of beings from the world that is just next to the physical, beings who live on the plane which we call the vital world. It is a world of all the desires and impulses and passions and of movements of violence and greed and cunning and every kind of ignorance; but all the dynamisms too are there, all the life-energies and all the powers. The beings of this world have by their nature a strange grip over the material world and can exercise upon it a sinister influence. Some of them are formed out of the remains of the human being that persist after death in the vital atmosphere near to the earth-plane. His desires and hungers still float there and remain in form even after the dissolution of the body; often they are moved to go on manifesting and satisfying themselves and the birth of these creatures of the vital world is the consequence. But these are minor beings and, if they can be very troublesome, it is yet not impossible to deal with them. There are others, far more dangerous, who have never been in human form; never were they born into a human body upon earth, for most often they refuse to accept this way of birth because it is slavery to matter and they prefer to remain in their own world, powerful and mischievous, and to control earthly beings from there. For, if they do not want to be born on earth, they do want to be in contact with the physical nature, but without being bound by it. Their method is to try first to cast their influence upon a man; then they enter slowly into his atmosphere and in the end may get complete possession of him, driving out entirely the real human soul and personality.

These creatures, when in possession of an earthly body, may have the human appearance but they have not a human nature. Their habit is to draw upon the life-force of human beings; they attack and capture vital power wherever they can and feed upon it. If they come into your atmosphere, you suddenly feel depressed and exhausted; if you are near them for some time you fall sick; if you live with one of them, it may kill you.

"But how is one to get such creatures out of one's environment when they are once there?"

The vital power incarnated in these beings is of a very material kind and it is effective only within a short distance. Ordinarily, if you do not live in the same house or if you are not in the same company with them, you do not come within their influence. But if you open some channel of connection or communication, through letters, for example, then you make possible an interchange of forces and are liable to be influenced by them even from a far distance. The wisest way with these beings is to cut off all connection and have nothing to do with them—unless indeed you have great occult knowledge and power and have learned how to cover and protect yourself—but even then it is always a dangerous thing to move about with them. To hope to transform them, as some people do, is a vain illusion; for they do not want to be transformed. They have no intention of allowing any transformation and all effort in that direction is useless.

These beings, when in the human body, are not often conscious of what they really are. Sometimes they have a vague feeling that they are not quite human in the ordinary way. But still there are cases where they are conscious and very conscious; not only do they know that they do not belong to

humanity but they know what they are, act in that knowledge and deliberately pursue their ends. The beings of the vital world are powerful by their very nature; when to their power they add knowledge, they become doubly dangerous. There is nothing to be done with these creatures; you should avoid having any dealings with them unless you have the power to crush and destroy them. If you are forced into contact with them, beware of the spell they can cast. These vital beings, when they manifest on the physical plane, have always a great hypnotic power; for the centre of their consciousness is in the vital world and not in the material and they are not veiled and dwarfed by the material consciousness as human beings are.

“Is it not a fact that these creatures are drawn by some peculiar fascination towards the spiritual life?”

Yes, because they feel they do not belong to this earth but come from somewhere else; and they feel too that they have powers they have half lost and they are eager to win them back. So whenever they meet anyone who can give them some knowledge of the invisible world, they rush to him. But they mistake the vital for the spiritual world and in their seeking follow vital and not spiritual ends. Or perhaps they deliberately seek to corrupt spirituality and build up an imitation of it in the mould of their own nature. Even then it is a kind of homage they pay, or a sort of amends they make, in their own way, to the spiritual life. And there is too some kind of attraction that compels them; they have revolted against the Divine rule, but in spite of their revolt or perhaps because of it, they feel somehow bound and are powerfully attracted by its presence.

This is how it happens that you see them sometimes used as instruments to bring into connection with each other those

who are to realise the spiritual life upon earth. They do not purposely serve this use, but are compelled to it. It is a kind of compensation that they pay. For they feel the pressure of the descending Light, they sense that the time has come or is soon coming when they must choose between conversion or dissolution, choose either to surrender to the Divine Will and take their part in the Great Plan or to sink into unconsciousness and cease to be. The contact with a seeker of Truth gives such a being his chance to change. All depends upon how he utilises his chance. Taken rightly, it may open his way to liberation from falsehood and obscurity and misery, which is the stuff out of which these vital creatures are made, and bring him to Regeneration and to Life.

“Have not these beings a great control over money power ?”

Yes. The power of money is at present under the influence or in the hands of the forces and beings of the vital world. It is because of this influence that you never see money going in any considerable amount to the cause of Truth. Always it goes astray, because it is in the clutch of the hostile forces and is one of the principal means by which they keep their grip upon the earth. The hold of the hostile forces upon money-power is powerfully, completely and thoroughly organised and to extract anything out of this compact organisation is a most difficult task. Each time that you try to draw a little of this money away from its present custodians, you have to undertake a fierce battle.

And yet one signal victory somewhere over the adverse forces that have the hold upon money would make victory possible simultaneously and automatically at all other points also. If in one place they yielded, all who now feel that they

cannot give money to the cause of Truth would suddenly experience a great and intense desire to give. It is not that those rich men who are more or less toys and instruments in the hands of the vital forces are averse to spend; their avarice is awake only when the vital desires and impulses are not touched. For when it is to gratify some desire that they call their own, they spend readily; but when they are called to share their ease and the benefits of their wealth with others, then they find it hard to part with their money. The vital power controlling money is like a guardian who keeps his wealth in a big safe always tightly closed. Each time the people who are in its grasp are asked to part with their money, they put all sorts of careful questions before they will consent to open their purses even a very little way; but if a vital impulse arises in them with its demand, the guardian is happy to open wide the coffer and money flows out freely. Commonly, the vital desires he obeys are connected with the sex impulses, but very often too he yields to the desire for fame and consideration, the desire for food or any other desire that is on the same vital level; whatever does not belong to this category is closely questioned and scrutinised, grudgingly admitted and most often refused help in the end. In those who are slaves of vital beings, the desire for truth and light and spiritual achievement, even if it at all touches them, cannot balance the desire for money. To win money from their hands for the Divine means to fight the devil out of them; you have first to conquer or convert the vital being whom they serve, and it is not an easy task. Men who are under the sway of vital creatures can change from a life of ease, cast away enjoyment and become intensely ascetic and yet remain just as wicked as ever and even by the change turn worse than before.

"Why is one person allowed to exercise his will over another?"

It is not that one is allowed to exercise his will over another, but that there is a universal will and those who are more or less capable of manifesting this force seem to have a stronger will-power. It is like vital force or light or electricity or any other power of nature; some are good channels or instruments for manifesting the power, others are poor channels. There is no question of morality here. It is a fact of nature, a law of the great play.

"Can one meet the beings of the vital in their own domain?"

Vital beings move in a supraphysical world where human beings, if they chance to enter, feel at sea, helpless and defenceless. The human being is at home and safe in the material body; the body is his protection. There are some who are full of contempt for their bodies and think that things will be much better and easier after death, without them. But in fact the body is your fortress and your shelter. While you are lodged in it the forces of the hostile world find a difficulty in getting any direct hold upon you. What are nightmares? These are your sorties into the vital world. And what is the first thing you try to do when you are in the grip of a nightmare? You rush back into your body and shake yourself into your normal physical consciousness. But in the world of the vital forces you are a stranger; it is an uncharted sea in which you have neither compass nor rudder. You do not know how to go, you do not know where to go and at each step you do just the opposite of what should be done. Directly you enter any realm of this world, its beings gather round you and want to encompass and get out of you all you have, to draw what they can and make it a food and a prey. If you have no strong

light and force radiating from within you, you move there without your body as if you had no coat to protect you against a chill and bleak atmosphere, no house to shield you, even no skin covering you, your nerves exposed and bare. There are men who say, "How unhappy I am in this body," and think of death as an escape ! But after death you have the same vital surroundings and are in danger from the same forces that are the cause of your misery in this life. The dissolution of the body forces you out into the open spaces of the vital world. And you have no longer a defence; there is not the physical body any longer to rush back to for safety.

It is here upon earth, in the body itself, that you must acquire a complete knowledge and learn to use a full and complete power. Only when you have done that will you be free to move about with entire security in all the worlds. Only when you are incapable of having the slightest fear, when you remain unmoved, for example, in the midst of the worst nightmare, can you say, "Now I am ready to go into the vital world." But this means the acquisition of a power and a knowledge that can come only when you are a perfect master of the impulses and desires of the vital Nature. You must be absolutely free from everything that can bring in the beings of the darkness or allow them to rule over you; if you are not free, beware !

No attachments, no desires, no impulses, no preferences; perfect equanimity, unchanging peace and absolute faith in the Divine protection : with that you are safe, without it you are in peril. And as long as you are not safe, it is better to do like little chickens that take shelter under the mother's wings.

"How does the physical body act as a protection?"

The physical body acts as a protection by its grossness,

by the very thing we charge against it. It is dull and insensitive, thick, rigid and hard; it is like a fortress with strong dense walls. The vital world is fluidic, there things move and mix and interpenetrate freely; it is like the waves of the sea that ceaselessly flow into each other and change and mingle. Against this fluidity of the vital world you are defenceless unless you can oppose to it a very powerful light and force from inside; otherwise it penetrates you and there is nothing to hamper its invading influence. But the body intervenes, cuts you off from the vital world and is a dam against the flood of its forces.

"But is there any individuality in the forms of the vital world, if it is so fluid?"

Individuality there is; only its forms are not so fixed and hard as the forms of embodied beings. Individuality does not mean an unplastic rigidity. A stone has a very rigid form, perhaps the most rigid we know, but there is very little individuality in it. Take ten or twenty stones together and you will have to be very careful if you want to discern between them. But the beings of the vital world can be recognised at the very first sight one from another; you distinguish them by something in the way in which the form is built, by the atmosphere which it carries with it, by the manner in which each moves and speaks and acts. As human beings change their expression according as they are happy or angry; these beings also undergo change in the stress of their moods, but the alteration is more intense in the vital world. Not only the mere expression but the very forms of the features change.

VII

*"What is the nature of the power that thought possesses ?
How and to what extent am I the creator of my world ?"*

According to the Buddhist teaching, every human being lives and moves in a world of his own, quite independent of the world in which another lives; it is only when a certain harmony is created between these different worlds that they interpenetrate and men can meet and understand one another. This is true of the mind; for everybody moves in a mental world of his own, created by his own thoughts. And it is so true that always, when something has been said, each understands it in a different way; for what he catches is not the thing that has been spoken but something he has in his own head. But it is a truth that belongs to the movement of the mental plane and holds good only there.

For the mind is an instrument of action and formation and not an instrument of knowledge; at each moment it is creating forms. Thoughts are forms and have an individual life, independent of their author : sent out from him into the world, they move in it towards the realisation of their own purpose of existence. When you think of anyone, your thought takes a form and goes out to find him; and, if your thinking is associated with some will that is behind it, the thought-form that has gone out from you makes an attempt to realise itself. Let us say, for instance, that you have a keen desire for a certain person to come and that, along with this vital impulse of desire, a strong imagination accompanies the mental form you have made; you imagine, "If he came, it would be like this or it would be like that." After a time you drop the idea altogether, and you do not know that even after you have forgotten it, your thought continues to exist. For it

does still exist and is in action, independent of you, and it would need a great power to bring it back from its work. It is working in the atmosphere of the person touched by it and creates in him the desire to come. And if there is a sufficient power of will in your thought-form, if it is a well-built formation, it will arrive at its own realisation. But between the formation and the realisation there is a certain lapse of time, and if in this interval your mind has been occupied with quite other things, then when there happens this fulfilment of your forgotten thought, you may not even remember that you once harboured it; you do not know that you were the instigator of its action and the cause of what has come about. And it happens very often too that when the result does come, you have ceased to desire or care for it. There are some men who have a very strong formative power of this kind and always they see their formations realised; but because they have not a well-disciplined mental and vital being, they want now one thing and now another and these different or opposite formations and their results collide and clash with one another. And these people wonder how it is that they are living in so great a confusion and disharmony ! They do not realise that it is their own thoughts and desires that have built the circumstances around them which seem to them so incoherent and contradictory and make their life almost unbearable.

This is a knowledge of great importance, if it is given along with the secret of its right use. Self-discipline and self-mastery are the secret; the secret is to find in oneself the source of the Truth and that constant government of the Divine Will which can alone give to each formation its full power and its integral and harmonious realisation. Men generally form thoughts without knowing how these formations move and act. Formed in this state of confusion and ignorance, they clash with one another and create an impression of strain and effort and fatigue

and the feeling that you are cutting your way through a multitude of obstacles. These conditions of ignorance and incoherence set in motion a confused conflict in which the strongest and the most enduring forms will have victory over the others.

There is one thing certain about the mind and its workings; it is that you can understand only what you already know in your own inner self. What strikes you in a book is what you have already experienced deep within you. Men find a book or a teaching very wonderful and often you hear them say, "That is exactly what I myself feel and know, but I could not bring it out or express it as well as it is expressed here." When men come across a book of true knowledge, each finds himself there, and at every new reading he discovers things that he did not see in it at first; it opens to him each time a new field of knowledge that had till then escaped him in it. But that is because it reaches layers of knowledge that were waiting for expression in the subconscious in him; the expression has now been given by somebody else and much better than he could himself have done it. But, once expressed, he immediately recognises it and feels that it is the truth. The knowledge that seems to come to you from outside is only an occasion for bringing out the knowledge that is within you.

The experience of misrepresentation of something we have said is a very common one and it has a similar source. We say something that is quite clear, but the way in which it is understood is stupefying ! Each sees in it something else than what was intended or even puts into it something that is quite the contrary of its sense. If you want to understand truly and avoid this kind of error, you must go behind the sound and movement of the words and learn to listen in silence. If you listen in silence, you will hear rightly and understand rightly; but so long as there is something moving about and making a noise in your head, you will understand only what is moving

in your head and not what is told you.

“Why is one pursued by a host of adverse conditions, when one first becomes acquainted with Yoga ? Someone has said that when you open the door to Yoga, you are confronted by a multitude of obstacles. Is this true ?”

It is not an absolute rule; and much depends upon the person. Adverse conditions come to many as a test for the weak points in their nature. The indispensable basis for Yoga, which must be well established before you can walk freely on the path, is equanimity. Naturally, from that point of view, all disturbances are tests which you have to pass. But they are necessary too in order to break down the limits which your mental constructions have built around you and which prevent your opening to the Light and the Truth. The whole mental world in which you live is limited, even though you may not know or feel its limitations, and something must come and break down this building in which your mind has shut itself and liberate it. For instance, you have some fixed rules, ideas or principles to which you attribute an absolute importance; most often it is an adherence to certain moral principles or precepts, such as the commandment “Honour thy father and mother...” or “Thou shalt not kill” and the rest. Each man has some fad or one preferred shibboleth or another, each thinks that he is free from this or that prejudice from which others suffer and is willing to regard such notions as quite false; but he imagines that his are not like theirs, it is for him the truth, the real truth. An attachment to a rule of the mind is an indication of a blindness still hiding somewhere. Take, for example, the very universal superstition, prevalent all over the world, that asceticism and spirituality are one and the same

thing. If you describe someone as a spiritual man or a spiritual woman, people at once think of one who does not eat or sits all day without moving, one who lives in a hut in great poverty, one who has given away all he had and keeps nothing for himself. This is the picture that immediately arises in the minds of ninety-nine people out of a hundred, when you speak of a spiritual man; the one proof of spirituality for them is poverty and abstinence from everything that is pleasant or comfortable. This is a mental construction which must be thrown down if you are to be free to see and follow the spiritual truth. For you come to the spiritual life with a sincere aspiration and you want to meet the Divine and realise the Divine in your consciousness and in your life; and then what happens is that you arrive in a place which is not at all a hut and meet a Divine One who is living a comfortable life, eating freely, surrounded by beautiful or luxurious things, not distributing what he has to the poor, but accepting and enjoying all that people give him. At once with your fixed mental rule you are bewildered and cry, "Why, what is this ? I thought I was to meet a spiritual man !" This false conception has to be broken down and disappear. Once it is gone, you find something that is much higher than your narrow ascetic rule, a complete openness that leaves the being free. If you are to get something, you accept it, and if you are to give up the very same thing, you with an equal willingness leave it. Things come and you take them up; things go and you let them pass, with the same smile of equanimity in the taking or the leaving.

Or, again, you have adopted as your golden rule, "Thou shalt not kill," and have a horror for cruelty and slaughter. Do not be surprised if you are immediately put in the presence of killing, not only once but repeatedly, until you understand that your ideal is no more than a mental principle and that a seeker of the spiritual truth should not be bound and

attached to a mental rule. And when once you are free from it, you will find perhaps that all these scenes which troubled you—and were indeed sent in order to trouble you and shake you out of your mental building—have, singularly enough, ceased altogether to happen in your presence. •

When you come to the Divine, you must abandon all mental conceptions; but, instead of doing that, you throw your conceptions upon the Divine and want the Divine to obey them. The only true attitude for a Yogi is to be plastic and ready to obey the Divine command whatever it may be; nothing must be indispensable to him, nothing a burden. Often the first impulse of those who want to live the spiritual life is to throw away all they have; but they do it because they want to be rid of a burden, not because they want to surrender to the Divine. Men who possess wealth and are surrounded by the things that give them luxury and enjoyment turn to the Divine, and immediately their movement is to run away from these things, —or, as they say, to “escape from their bondage.” But it is a wrong movement; you must not think that the things you have belong to you,—they belong to the Divine. If the Divine wants you to enjoy anything, enjoy it; but be ready too to give it up the very next moment with a smile.

“What are physical ailments? Are they attacks by the hostile forces from outside?”

There are two factors that have to be considered in the matter. There is what comes from outside and there is what comes from your inner condition. Your inner condition becomes a cause of illness when there is a resistance or revolt in it or when there is some part in you that does not respond to the protection; or even there may be something there that

almost willingly and wilfully calls in the adverse forces. It is enough if there is a slight movement of this kind in you; the hostile forces are at once upon you and their attack takes often the form of illness.

"But are not illnesses sometimes the result of microbes and not a part of the movement of Yoga?"

Where does Yoga begin and where does it end ? Is not the whole of your life Yoga ? The possibilities of illness are always there in your body and around you; you carry within you or there swarm about you the microbes and germs of every disease. How is it that all of a sudden you succumb to an illness which you did not have for years ? You will say it is due to a "depression of the vital force." But from where does the depression come ? It comes from some disharmony in the being, from a lack of receptivity to the divine forces. When you cut yourself off from the energy and light that sustain you, then there is this depression, there is created what medical science calls a "favourable ground" and something takes advantage of it. It is doubt, gloominess, lack of confidence, a selfish turning back upon yourself that cuts you off from the light and divine energy and gives the attack this advantage. It is this that is the cause of your falling ill and not microbes.

"But has it not been found that by improved sanitation the health of the average citizen improves?"

Medicine and sanitation are indispensable in the ordinary life, but I am not speaking now of the average citizen, I am

speaking of those who do Yoga. Still there is this disadvantage of sanitation that while you diminish the chances of catching an illness, you diminish also your natural power of resistance. Attendants in hospitals, who are always washing with disinfectants, find that their hands become more easily infected and are much more susceptible than the hands of others. There are people, on the contrary, who know nothing of hygiene and do the most insanitary things and yet remain immune. Their very ignorance helps them because it shuts them to the suggestions that come with medical knowledge. On the other hand, your belief in the sanitary precautions you take helps them to work. For your thought is, "Now I am disinfected and safe," and to that extent it makes you safe.

"But why then are we to take sanitary precautions such as drinking only filtered water?"

Is any one of you pure and strong enough not to be affected by suggestions? If you drink unfiltered water and think, "Now I am drinking impure water," you have every chance of falling sick. And even though such suggestions may not enter through the conscious mind, the whole of your subconscious is there, almost helplessly open to take in any kind of suggestion. In life it is the action of the subconscious that has the larger share and it acts a hundred times more powerfully than the conscious parts. The normal human condition is a state filled with apprehensions and fears; if you observe your mind deeply for ten minutes, you will find that for nine out of the ten it is full of fears—it carries in it fear about many things, big and small, near and far, seen and unseen, and though you do not usually take conscious notice of it, it is there all the same. To be free from all fear can come only by steady effort and discipline.

And even if by discipline and effort you have liberated your mind and your vital of apprehension and fear, it is more difficult to convince the body. But that too must be done. Once you enter the path of Yoga you must get rid of all fears—the fears of your mind, the fears of your vital, the fears of your body which are lodged in its very cells. One of the uses of the blows and knocks you receive on the path of Yoga is to rid you of all fear. The causes of your fears leap on you again and again, until you can stand before them free and indifferent, untouched and pure. One has a fear of the sea, another the fear of fire. The latter will find, it may be, that he has to face conflagration after conflagration till he is so trained that not a cell of his body quivers. That of which you have horror comes repeatedly till the horror is gone. One who seeks the transformation and is a follower of the Path, must become through and through fearless, not to be touched or shaken by anything whatever in any part of his nature.

VIII

“If our will is only an expression or echo of the universal will, where is the place of individual initiative ? Is the individual only an instrument to register universal movements ? Has he no power of creation or origination ?”

All depends upon the plane of consciousness from which you are looking at things and speaking of them or on the part of the being from which you act.

If you look from one plane of consciousness, the individual will appear to you as if he were not only an instrument and recorder, but a creator. But look from another and higher plane of consciousness with a wider view of things and you will see that this is only an appearance. In the workings of the universe whatever happens is the result of all that has happened before. How do you propose to separate one being from the integral play of the manifestation or one movement from the whole mass of movements ? Where are you going to put the origin of a thing or its beginning ? The whole play is a rigidly connected chain; one link merges imperceptibly into another. Nothing can be taken out of the chain and explained by itself as if it were its own source and beginning.

And what do you mean when you say that the individual creates or originates a movement ? Does he do it all out of himself or out of nothing as it were ? If a being were able to create in that way a thought or feeling or action or anything else, he would be the creator of the world. It is only if the individual goes back in his consciousness into the greater Consciousness which is the origin of things, that he can be an originator; he can initiate a movement only by identifying himself with the conscious Power which is the ultimate source of all movements.

There are many planes of consciousness; and the determinism of one plane is not the same as the determinism of another. So, when you speak of the creative individual, of what part of him are you thinking ? For he is a very composite entity. Is it his psychic being of which you speak, or the mental or the vital or the physical ? Between the unseen source of a movement and its manifestation, its external expression through the individual, there are all these steps and many others; and on each many modifications of it take place, many distortions and deformations. It is these changes that give the illusion of a new creation, a new origin, or a new starting-point for a movement. It is like when you put a stick into water; you see the stick, not in its true line, but bent into an angle. But it is an illusion, a distortion by the sight; it is not even a real angle.

Each individual consciousness, you can say, brings into the universal movement something that you can call from a certain point of view its own deformation or from another its own quality of the movement. These individual motions are part of the play of the Divine movement; they are not themselves origins, they are a transformation of things whose origin you must seek in the universe as a whole.

The sense of separation is spread everywhere, but it is an illusion; it is one of those false moods of which we must be cured if we want to enter into the true consciousness. The mind cuts the world into small bits : it says, here this stops, there that begins, and by this fragmentation it succeeds in distorting the universal movement. There is one great flow of a single, all-embracing, all-containing consciousness which manifests in an ever unrolling universe. This is the truth that stands behind everything here; but there is too this illusion which masks the truth from you, the illusion of these many movements which imagine that they are separate from one another,

that they stand by themselves, in themselves and for themselves and that each is a thing in itself apart from the rest of the universe. They have the impression that their action and reaction upon one another is something external, as if they were like different worlds standing in each other's presence but with no point of contact except some external relations at a distance. Each sees himself as if he were a separate personality existing in its own right. This error of the separative sense has been allowed as part of the universal play, because it was necessary that the one consciousness should objectify itself and fix its forms. But because it has been allowed in the past, it does not follow that the illusion of separateness must always continue.

In the universal play there are some, the majority, who are ignorant instruments; they are actors who are moved about like puppets, knowing nothing. There are others who are conscious, and these act their part, knowing that it is a play. And there are some who have the full knowledge of the universal movement and are identified with it and with the one Divine Consciousness and yet consent to act as though they were something separate, a division of the whole. There are many intermediary stages between that ignorance and this full knowledge, many ways of participating in the play. There is a state of ignorance in which you do a thing and believe that it was you who decided it; there is a state of lesser ignorance in which you do it knowing that you are made to do it but you do not know how or why; and there is too a state of consciousness in which you are fully aware,—for you know what it is that acts through you, you know that you are an instrument, you know how and why your act is done, its process and its purpose. The state of ignorance in which you believe that you are the doer of your acts persists so long as it is necessary for your development; but as soon as you are capable of passing into a higher condition, you begin to

see that you are an instrument of the one consciousness; you take a step upward and you rise to a higher conscious level.

"Do hostile forces attack one on the mental plane as they do in the vital world?"

It is difficult to give a precise answer without going into a number of explanations into which we cannot now enter.

Mind is one movement, but there are many varieties of the movement, many strata, that touch and even press into each other. At the same time the movement we call mind penetrates into other planes. In the mental world itself there are many levels. All these mind-planes and mind-forces are interdependent; but yet there is a difference in the quality of their movements and for facility of expression we have to separate them from one another. Thus we can speak of a higher mind, an intermediary mind, a physical and even a quite material mind; and there are many other distinctions that can be made.

Now, there are mental planes that stand high above the vital world and escape its influence; there are no hostile forces or beings there. But there are others—and they are many—that can be touched or penetrated by the vital forces. The mind-plane that belongs to the physical world, the physical mind, as we usually call it, is more material in its structure and movement than the true mind and it is very much under the sway of the vital world and the hostile forces. This physical mind is usually in a kind of alliance with the lower vital consciousness and its movements; when the lower vital manifests certain desires and impulses, this more material mind comes to its aid and justifies and supports them with specious explanations and reasonings and excuses. It is this layer of mind that is most open to suggestions from the vital world and most often

invaded by its forces. But there is in us a higher mind which moves in the region of disinterested ideas and luminous speculations and is the originator of forms, and there is a mind of pure ideas that have not yet been put into form; these greater mind-levels are free from the vital movements and the adverse forces, because they stand far above them. There may be contradictory movements there; there may be movements and formations that come into clash with the Truth or are in conflict with one another; but there is no vital disturbance, nothing that can be called hostile. The true philosopher mind, the mind that is the thinker, discoverer, maker of forms, and the mind of pure ideas that are not yet put into form, are beyond this inferior invasion and influence. But this does not mean that their motions cannot be imitated or their creations misused by perverse or hostile beings of a greater make and higher origin than those of whom I have till now spoken.

“What are the conditions in the psychic world ? How is it situated with regard to the hostile forces ?”

The psychic world or plane of consciousness is that part of the world, the psychic being is that part of the being which is directly under the influence of the Divine Consciousness; the hostile forces cannot have even the remotest action upon it. It is a world of harmony, and everything moves in it from light to light and from progress to progress. It is the seat of the Divine Consciousness, the Divine Self in the individual being. It is a centre of light and truth and knowledge and beauty and harmony which the Divine Self in each of you creates by his presence, little by little; it is influenced, formed and moved by the Divine Consciousness of which it is a part and parcel. It is in each of you the deep inner being which you

have to find in order that you may come in contact with the Divine in you. It is the intermediary between the Divine Consciousness and your external consciousness; it is the builder of the inner life, it is that which manifests in the outer nature the order and rule of the Divine Will. If you become aware in your outer consciousness of the psychic being within you and unite with it, you can find the pure Eternal Consciousness and live in it; instead of being moved by the Ignorance as the human being constantly is, you grow aware of the presence of an eternal light and knowledge within you, and to it you surrender and are integrally consecrated to it and moved by it in all things.

For your psychic being is that part of you which is already given to the Divine. It is its influence gradually spreading from within towards the most outward and material boundaries of your consciousness that will bring about the transformation of your entire nature. There can be no obscurity here; it is the luminous part in you. Most people are unconscious of this psychic part within them; the effort of Yoga is to make you conscious of it, so that the process of your transformation, instead of a slow labour extending through centuries, can be pressed into one life or even a few years.

The psychic being is that which persists after death, because it is your eternal self; it is this that carries the consciousness forward from life to life.

The psychic being is the real individuality of the true and divine individual within you. For your individuality means your special mode of expression and your psychic being is a special aspect of the one Divine Consciousness that has taken shape in you. But in the psychic consciousness there is not that sense of division between the individual and the universal consciousness which affects the other parts of your nature. You are conscious there that your individuality is your own line

of expression, but at the same time you know too that it is an expression objectifying the one universal consciousness. It is as though you had taken a portion out of yourself and put it in front of you and there were a mutual look and play of movement between the two. This duality was necessary in order to create and establish the objectivised relation and to enjoy it; but in your psychic being the separation that sharpens the duality is seen to be an illusion, an appearance and nothing more.

*“Is there a difference between the ‘spiritual’ and the ‘psychic’ ?
Are they different planes ?”*

Yes, the psychic plane belongs to the personal manifestation; the psychic is that which is divine in you put out to be dynamic in the play. But when we speak of the spiritual we are thinking of something that is concentrated in the Divine rather than in the external manifestation. The spiritual plane is something static behind and above the outward play; it supports the instruments of the nature, but is not itself included or involved in the external manifestation here.

But in speaking of these things one must be careful not to be imprisoned by the words we use. When I speak of the psychic or the spiritual, I mean things that are very deep and real behind the flat surface of the words and intimately connected even in their difference. Intellectual definitions and distinctions are too external and rigid to seize the true truth of things. And yet, unless you are very much in the habit of speaking to one another, there is almost a necessity of defining the sense of your words, if you are to understand each other. The ideal condition for a conversation is when the minds are so well attuned that the words are only a support for a spontaneous mutual understanding and you need not explain at each

step what you utter. This is the advantage when you talk always with the same persons; an attuned harmony is established between their minds and the significance of the things spoken penetrates them at once.

There is a world of ideas without form and it is there that you must enter if you want to seize what is behind the words. So long as you have to draw your understanding from the forms of words, you are likely to fall into much confusion about the true sense; but if in a silence of your mind you can rise into the world from which ideas descend to take form, at once the real understanding comes. If you are to be sure of understanding one another, you must be able to understand in silence. There is a condition in which your minds are so well attuned and harmonised together that one perceives the thought of the other without any necessity of words. But if there is not this attunement, there will always be some deformation of your meaning, because to what you speak the other mind supplies its own significance. I use a word in a certain sense or shade of its sense; you are accustomed to put into it another sense or shade. Then, evidently, you will understand, not my exact meaning in it, but what the word means to you. This is true not of speech only, but of reading also. If you want to understand a book with a deep teaching in it, you must be able to read it in the mind's silence; you must wait and let the expression go deep inside you into the region where words are no more and from there come slowly back to your exterior consciousness and its surface understanding. But if you let the words jump at your external mind and try to adapt and adjust the two, you will have entirely missed their real sense and power. There can be no perfect understanding unless you are in union with the unexpressed mind that is behind the centre of expression.

We spoke once of individual minds as worlds that are dis-

tinct and separate from one another; each is shut up in itself and has almost no direct point of contact with any other. But that is in the region of the inferior mind; there your own formations close you in; you cannot get out of them or out of yourself; you can understand only yourself and your own reflection in things. But here in this higher region of the unexpressed mind and its purer altitudes you are free; when you enter there, you go out of yourself and penetrate into a universal mental plane in which each individual mental world is dipping as if into a huge sea. There you can understand entirely what is going on in another and read his mind 'as if it were your own, because there no separation divides mind from mind. It is only when you unite in that region with others that you can understand them; otherwise you are not attuned, you do not touch, you have no means of knowing precisely what is happening in another mind than yours. Most often when you are in the presence of another you are quite ignorant of what he thinks or feels; but if you are able to go beyond and above this external plane of expression, if you can enter into a plane where a silent communion is possible, then you can read in that other as you would in yourself. Then the words you use for your expression are of very little importance, because the full comprehension lies beyond them in something else and a minimum of words is sufficient for your purpose. Long explanations are not necessary there; you do not need that a thought should be brought out into full expression, for the direct vision of what is meant is with you.

"Will a time come when the hostile forces will be there no longer?"

When their presence in the world is no more of any use, they

will disappear. Their action is used as a testing process, so that nothing may be forgotten, nothing left out in the work of transformation. They will allow no mistake. If you have overlooked in your own being even a single detail, they will come and put their touch upon that neglected spot and make it so painfully evident that you will be forced to change. When they will no longer be required for this process, their existence will become useless and they will vanish. They are suffered to exist here, because they are necessary in the Great Work; once they are no more indispensable, they will either change or go.

"Will it be a long time before that happens ?"

All depends upon your point of view. For time is relative; you can speak of it from the ordinary external human standpoint or from the deeper view-point of an inner consciousness or from the outlook of the Divine.

Whether the thing to be done takes a thousand years or only a year, according to the human computation, does not matter at all, if you are one with the Divine Consciousness; for then you leave outside you the things of the human nature and you enter into the infinity and eternity of the Divine Nature. Then you escape from this feeling of a great eagerness of hurry with which men are obsessed, because they want to see things done. Agitation, haste, restlessness lead nowhere. It is foam on the sea; it is a great fuss that stops with itself. Men have a feeling that if they are not all the time running about and bursting into fits of feverish activity, they are doing nothing. It is an illusion to think that all these so-called movements change things. It is merely taking a cup and beating the water in it; the water is moved about, but it is not changed for all your

beating. This illusion of action is one of the greatest illusions of human nature. It hurts progress because it brings on you the necessity of rushing always into some excited movement. If you could only perceive the illusion and see how useless it all is, how it changes nothing ! Nowhere can you achieve anything by it. Those who are thus rushing about are the tools of forces that make them dance for their own amusement. And they are not forces of the best quality either.

Whatever has been done in the world has been done by the very few who can stand outside the action in silence; for it is they who are the instruments of the Divine Power. They are dynamic agents, conscious instruments; they bring down the forces that change the world. Things can be done in that way, not by a restless activity. In peace, in silence and in quietness the world was built; and each time that something is to be truly built, it is in peace and silence and quietness that it must be done. It is ignorance to believe that you must run from morning to night and labour at all sorts of futile things in order to do something for the world.

Once you step back from these whirling forces into quiet regions, you see how great is the illusion ! Humanity appears to you like a mass of blind creatures rushing about without knowing what they do or why they do it and only knocking and stumbling against each other. And it is this that they call action and life ! It is empty agitation, not action, not true life.

I said once that, to speak usefully for ten minutes, you should remain silent for ten days. I could add that, to act usefully for one day, you should keep quiet for a year ! Of course, I am not speaking of the ordinary day-to-day acts that are needed for the common external life, but of those who have or believe that they have something to do for the world. And the silence I speak of is the inner quietude that those alone have who can act without being identified with their action, merged

into it and blinded and deafened by the noise and form of their own movement. Stand back from your action and rise into an outlook above these temporal motions; enter into the consciousness of Eternity. Then only you will know what true action is.

IX

“What is the relation of human love to Divine love ? Is the human an obstacle to the Divine love ? Or is not rather the capacity for human love an index to the capacity for Divine love ? Have not great spiritual figures, such as Christ, Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, been remarkably loving and affectionate by nature ?”

Love is one of the great universal forces; it exists by itself and its movement is free and independent of the objects in which and through which it manifests. It manifests wherever it finds a possibility for manifestation, wherever there is receptivity, wherever there is some opening for it. What you call love and think of as a personal or individual thing is only your capacity to receive and manifest this universal force. But because it is universal, it is not therefore an unconscious force; it is a supremely conscious Power. Consciously it seeks for its manifestation and realisation upon earth; consciously it chooses its instruments, awakens to its vibrations those who are capable of an answer, endeavours to realise in them that which is its eternal aim, and when the instrument is not fit, drops it and turns to look for others. Men think that they have suddenly fallen in love; they see their love come and grow and then it fades—or, it may be, endures a little longer in some who are more specially fitted for its more lasting movement. But their sense in this of a personal experience all their own was an illusion. It was a wave from the everlasting sea of universal love.

Love is universal and eternal; it is always manifesting itself and always identical in its essence. And it is a Divine Force; for the distortions we see in its apparent workings belong to its instruments. Love does not manifest in human beings alone; it is everywhere. Its movement is there in plants, perhaps in

the very stones; in the animals it is easy to detect its presence. All the deformations of this great and divine Power come from the obscurity and ignorance and selfishness of the limited instrument. Love, the eternal force, has no clinging, no desire, no hunger for possession, no self-regarding attachment; it is, in its pure movement, the seeking for union of the self with the Divine, a seeking absolute and regardless of all other things. Love divine gives itself and asks for nothing. What human beings have made of it, we do not need to say; they have turned it into an ugly and repulsive thing. And yet even in human beings the first contact of love does bring down something of its purer substance; they become capable for a moment of forgetting themselves, for a moment its divine touch awakens and magnifies all that is fine and beautiful. But afterwards there comes to the surface the human nature, full of its impure demands, asking for something in exchange, bartering what it gives, clamouring for its own inferior satisfactions, distorting and soiling what was divine.

To manifest the Divine love you must be capable of receiving the Divine love. For only those can manifest it who are by their nature open to its native movement. The wider and clearer the opening in them, the more they manifest love divine in its original purity; the more it is mixed with the lower human feelings, the greater is the deformation. One who is not open to love in its essence and in its truth cannot approach the Divine. Even the seekers through knowledge come to a point beyond which if they want to go farther, they are bound to find themselves entering at the same time into love and to feel the two as one, knowledge the light of the divine union, love the very heart of knowledge. There is a place in the soul's progress where they meet and you cannot distinguish one from the other. The division, the distinction between the two that you make in the beginning are a creation of the mind: once

you rise to a higher level, they disappear.

Among those who have come into this world seeking to reveal the Divine here and transform earthly life, there are some who have manifested the Divine love in a greater fullness. In some the purity of the manifestation is so great that they are misunderstood by the whole of humanity and are even accused of being hard and unloving, although the Divine love is there. But it is in them divine and not human in its form as in its substance. For when man speaks of love, he associates it with an emotional and sentimental weakness. But the divine intensity of self-forgetfulness, the capacity of throwing oneself out entirely, making no restriction and no reservation, as a gift, asking nothing in exchange, this is little known to human beings. And when it is there unmixed with weak and sentimental emotions, they find it hard and cold; they cannot recognise in it the very highest and intensest power of love.

The manifestation of the love of the Divine in the world was the great holocaust, the supreme self-giving. The Perfect Consciousness accepted to be merged and absorbed into the unconsciousness of matter, so that consciousness might be awakened in the depths of its obscurity and little by little a Divine Power might rise in it and make the whole of this manifested universe a highest expression of the Divine Consciousness and the Divine Love. This was the supreme love, to accept the loss of the perfect condition of supreme divinity, its absolute consciousness, its infinite knowledge, to unite with unconsciousness, to dwell in the world with ignorance and darkness. And yet none perhaps would call it love; for it does not clothe itself in a superficial sentiment, it makes no demand in exchange for what it has done, no show of its sacrifice. The force of love in the world is trying to find consciousnesses that are capable of receiving this divine movement in its purity

and expressing it. This race of all beings towards love, this irresistible push and seeking out in the world's heart and in all hearts, is the impulse given by a Divine love behind the human longing and seeking. It touches millions of instruments, trying always, always failing; but this constant touch prepares these instruments and suddenly one day there will awake in them the capacity of self-giving, the capacity of loving.

The movement of love is not limited to human beings and it is perhaps less distorted in other worlds than in the human. Look at the flowers and trees. When the sun sets and all becomes silent, sit down for a moment and put yourself into communion with nature: you will feel rising from the earth, from below the roots of the trees and mounting upward and coursing through their fibres up to the highest outstretching branches, the aspiration of an intense love and longing,—a longing for something that brings light and gives happiness, for the light that is gone and they wish to have back again. There is a yearning so pure and intense that if you can feel the movement in the trees, your own being too will go up in an ardent prayer for the peace and light and love that are unmanifested here. Once you have come in contact with this large, pure and true divine love, if you have felt it even for a short time and in its smallest form, you will realise what an abject thing human desire has made of it. It has become in human nature something low, brutal, selfish, violent, ugly, or else it is something weak and sentimental, made up of the pettiest feelings, brittle, superficial, exacting. And this baseness and brutality or this self-regarding weakness they call love !

“Is our vital being to take part in the Divine love? If it does, what is the right and correct form of participation it should take?”

Where is the manifestation of Divine love intended to stop? Is it to be confined to some unreal or immaterial region? Divine love plunges its manifestation upon earth down into the most material matter. It does not indeed find itself in the selfish distortions of the human consciousness; but the vital in itself is as important an element in Divine love as it is in the whole of the manifested universe. There is no possibility of movement and progress without the mediation of the vital; but because this Power of Nature has been so badly distorted, some prefer to believe that it has to be pulled out altogether and thrown away. But it is only through the vital that matter can be touched by the transforming power of the Spirit. If the vital is not there to infuse its dynamism and living force, matter will remain dead; for the higher parts of the being will not come into contact with earth, will not be concretised in life, and they will depart unsatisfied and disappear.

The Divine love of which I speak is a Love that manifests here upon this physical earth, in matter, but it must be pure of its human distortions, if it is to incarnate. The vital is an indispensable agent in this as in all manifestation. But as has happened always, the adverse powers have put their hold on this most precious thing. It is the energy of the vital that enters into dull and insensitive matter and makes it responsive and alive. But the adverse forces have distorted it; they have turned it into a field of violence and selfishness and desire and every kind of ugliness and prevented it from taking part in the divine work. The one thing to be done is to change it, not to suppress its movement or destroy it. For without it no intensity is possible anywhere. The vital is in its very nature

that in us which can give itself away. Just because it is that which has always the impulse and the strength to take, it is also that which is capable of giving itself to the utmost; because it knows how to possess, it knows also how to abandon itself without reserve. The true vital movement is the most beautiful and magnificent of movements; but it has been twisted and turned into the most ugly, the most distorted, the most repulsive. Wherever into a human story of love, there has entered even an atom of pure love and it has been allowed to manifest without too much distortion, we find a true and beautiful thing. And if the movement does not last, it is because it is not conscious of its own aim and seeking; it has not the knowledge that it is not the union of one being with another that it is seeking after but the union of all beings with the Divine.

Love is a supreme force which the Eternal Consciousness sent down from itself into an obscure and darkened world that it might bring back that world and its beings to the Divine. The material world in its darkness and ignorance had forgotten the Divine. Love came into the darkness; it awakened all that lay there asleep; it whispered, opening the ears that were sealed, "There is something that is worth waking to, worth living for, and it is love !" And with the awakening to love there entered into the world the possibility of coming back to the Divine. The creation moves upward through love towards the Divine and in answer there leans downward to meet the creation the Divine Love and Grace. Love cannot exist in its pure beauty, love cannot put on its native power and intense joy of fullness until there is this interchange, this fusion between the earth and the Supreme, this movement of Love from the Divine to the creation and from the creation to the Divine. This world was a world of dead matter, till Divine love descended into it and awakened it to life. Ever since it has gone in search of this divine source of life, but it has taken in its search every

kind of wrong turn and mistaken way, it has wandered hither and thither in the dark. The mass of this creation has moved on its road like the blind seeking for the unknown, seeking but ignorant of what it sought. The maximum it has reached is what seems to human beings love in its highest form, its purest and most disinterested kind, like the love of the mother for the child. This human movement of love is secretly seeking for something else than what it has yet found; but it does not know where to find it, it does not even know what it is. The moment man's consciousness awakens to the Divine love, pure, independent of all manifestation in human forms, he knows for what his heart has all the time been truly longing. That is the beginning of the Soul's aspiration, that brings the awakening of the consciousness and its yearning for union with the Divine. All the forms that are of the ignorance, all the deformations it has imposed must from that moment fade and disappear and give place to one single movement of the creation answering to the Divine love by its love for the Divine. Once the creation is conscious, awakened, opened to love for the Divine, the Divine love pours itself without limit back into the creation. The circle of the movement turns back upon itself and the ends meet; there is the joining of the extremes, supreme Spirit and manifesting Matter, and their divine union becomes constant and complete.

Great beings have taken birth in this world who came to bring down here something of the sovereign purity and power of Divine love. The Divine love has thrown itself into a personal form in them that its realisation upon earth may be at once more easy and more perfect. Divine love, when manifested in a personal being, is easier to realise; it is more difficult when it is unmanifested or impersonal in its movement. A human being, awakened by this personal touch, with this personal intensity, to the consciousness of the Divine love, will find his

work and change made more easy; the union for which he seeks becomes more natural and close. And the union, the realisation will become for him, too, more full, more perfect; for the wide uniformity of a universal and impersonal Love will be lit up and vivified with the colour and beauty of all possible relations with the Divine.

X

“What is exactly the nature of religion ? Is it an obstacle in the way of the spiritual life ?”

Religion belongs to the higher mind of humanity. “It is the effort of man’s higher mind to approach, as far as lies in its power, something beyond it, something to which humanity gives the name God or Spirit or Truth or Faith or Knowledge or the Infinite, some kind of Absolute, which the human mind cannot reach and yet tries to reach. Religion may be divine in its ultimate origin; in its actual nature it is not divine but human. In truth we should speak rather of religions than of religion; for the religions made by man are many. These different religions, even when they had not the same origin, have most of them been made in the same way. We know how the Christian religion came into existence. It was certainly not Jesus who made what is known as Christianity, but some learned and very clever men put their heads together and built it up into the thing we see. There was nothing divine in the way in which it was formed, and there is nothing divine either in the way in which it functions. And yet the excuse or occasion for the formation was undoubtedly some revelation from what one could call a Divine Being, a Being who came from elsewhere bringing down with him from a higher plane a certain Knowledge and Truth for the earth. He came and suffered for his Truth ; but very few understood what he said, few cared to find and hold to the Truth for which he suffered. Buddha retired from the world, sat down in meditation and discovered a way out of earthly suffering and misery, out of all this illness and death and desire and sin and hunger. He saw a Truth which he endeavoured to express and communicate to the disciples and followers who gathered around him.

But even before he was dead, his teaching had already begun to be twisted and distorted. It was only after his disappearance that Buddhism as a full-fledged religion reared its head, founded upon what the Buddha is supposed to have said and on the supposed significance of these reported sayings. But soon too, because the disciples and the disciples' disciples could not agree on what the Master had said or what he meant by his utterances, there grew up a host of sects and sub-sects in the body of the parent religion—a Southern Path, a Northern Path, a Far Eastern Path, each of them claiming to be the only, the original, the undefiled doctrine of the Buddha. The same fate overtook the teaching of the Christ; that too came to be made in the same way into a set and organised religion. It is often said that, if Jesus came back, he would not be able to recognise what he taught in the forms that have been imposed on it, and if Buddha were to come back and see what has been made of his teaching, he would immediately run back discouraged to Nirvana ! All religions have each the same story to tell. The occasion for its birth is the coming of a great Teacher of the world. He comes and reveals and is the incarnation of a Divine Truth. But men seize upon it, trade upon it, make an almost political organisation out of it. The religion is equipped by them with a government and policy and laws, with its creeds and dogmas, its rules and regulations, its rites and ceremonies, all binding upon its adherents, all absolute and inviolable. Like the State, it too administers rewards to the loyal and assigns punishments for those that revolt or go astray, for the heretic and the renegade.

The first and principal article of these established and formal religions runs always, "Mine is the supreme, the only truth, all others are in falsehood or inferior." For without this fundamental dogma, established credal religions could not have existed. If you do not believe and proclaim that you alone

possess the one or the highest truth, you will not be able to impress people and make them flock to you.

This attitude is natural to the religious mind; but it is just that which makes religion stand in the way of the spiritual life. The articles and dogmas of a religion are mind-made things and, if you cling to them and shut yourself up in a code of life made out for you, you do not know and cannot know the truth of the spirit that lies beyond all codes and dogmas, wide and large and free. When you stop at a religious creed and tie yourself in it, taking it for the only truth in the world, you stop the advance and widening of your inner soul. But if you look at religion from another angle, it need not always be an obstacle to all men. If you regard it as one of the higher activities of humanity and if you can see in it the aspirations of man without ignoring the imperfection of all man-made things, it may well be a kind of help for you to approach the spiritual life. Taking it up in a serious and earnest spirit, you can try to find out what truth is there, what aspiration lies hidden in it, what divine inspiration has undergone transformation and deformation here by the human mind and a human organisation, and with an appropriate mental stand you can get religion even as it is to throw some light on your way and to lend some support to your spiritual endeavour.

In all religions we find invariably a certain number of people who possess a great emotional capacity and are full of a real and ardent aspiration, but have a very simple mind and do not feel the need of approaching the Divine through knowledge. For such natures religion has a use and it is even necessary for them; for, through external forms, like the ceremonies of the Church, it offers a kind of support and help to their inner spiritual aspiration. In every religion there are some who have evolved a high spiritual life. But it is not the religion that gave them their spirituality; it is they who have

put their spirituality into the religion. Put anywhere else, born into any other cult, they would have found there and lived there the same spiritual life. It is their own capacity, it is some power of their inner being and not the religion they profess that has made them what they are. This power in their nature is such that religion to them does not become a slavery or a bondage. Only as they have not a strong, clear and active mind, they need to believe in this or that creed as absolutely true and to give themselves up to it without any disturbing question or doubt. I have met in all religions people of this kind and it would be a crime to disturb their faith. For them religion is not an obstacle. An obstacle for those who can go farther, it may be a help for those who cannot, but are yet able to travel a certain distance on the paths of the Spirit. Religion has been an impulse to the worst things and the best; if the fiercest wars have been waged and the most hideous persecutions carried on in its name, it has stimulated too supreme heroism and self-sacrifice in its cause. Along with philosophy it marks the limit the human mind has reached in its highest activities. It is an impediment and a chain if you are a slave to its outer body; if you know how to use its inner substance, it can be your jumping-board into the realm of the Spirit.

One who holds a particular faith or who has found out some truth, is disposed to think that he alone has found the Truth, whole and entire. This is human nature. A mixture of falsehood seems necessary for human beings to stand on their legs and move on their way. If the vision of the Truth were suddenly given to them they would be crushed under the weight.

Each time that something of the Divine Truth and the Divine Force comes down to manifest upon earth, some change is effected in the earth's atmosphere. In the descent, those who are receptive are awakened to some inspiration from it, some touch, some beginning of sight. If they were capable of

holding and expressing rightly what they receive, they would say, "A great force has come down; I am in contact with it and what I understand of it, I will tell you." But most of them are not capable of that, because they have small minds. They get illumined, possessed, as it were, and cry, "I have the Divine Truth, I possess it whole and entire." There are now upon earth at least two dozen Christs, if not as many Buddhas; India alone can supply any number of Avatars, not to speak of minor manifestations. But in this way, the whole thing begins to look grotesque; but if you see what is behind, it is not so stupid as it seems at the first glance. The truth is that the human personality has come in contact with some Being, some Power, and under the influence of education and tradition calls it Buddha or Christ or by any other familiar name. It is difficult to affirm that it was Buddha himself or the very Christ with whom there was the contact, but none can assert either that the inspiration did not come from that which inspired the Christ or the Buddha. These human vessels may very well have received the inspiration from some such source. If they were modest and simple, they would be content to say that much and no more; they would say, "I have received this inspiration from such and such a Great One," but instead they proclaim, "I am that Great One." I knew one who affirmed that he was both Christ and Buddha ! He had received something, had experienced a truth, had seen the Divine Presence in himself and in others. But the experience was too strong for him, the truth too great. He became half crazy and the next day went out into the streets, proclaiming that in him Christ and Buddha had become one.

One Divine Consciousness is here working through all these beings, preparing its way through all these manifestations. At this day it is here at work upon earth more powerfully than it has ever been before. There are some who receive

its touch in some way, or to some degree; but what they receive they distort, they make their own thing out of it. Others feel the touch but cannot bear the force and go mad under the pressure. But some have the capacity to receive and the strength to bear, and it is they who will become the vessels of the full knowledge, the chosen instruments and agents.

If you want to appraise the real value of the religion in which you are born or brought up or to have a correct perspective of the country or society to which you belong by birth, if you want to find out how relative a thing the particular environment is into which you happened to be thrown and confined, you have only to go round the earth and see that what you think good is looked upon as bad elsewhere and what is considered as bad in one place is welcomed as good in another. All countries and all religions are built up out of a mass of traditions. In all of them you will meet saints and heroes and great and mighty personalities as well as small and wicked people. You will then perceive what a mockery it is to say, "Because I am brought up in this religion, therefore it is the only true religion; because I am born in this country, therefore it is the best of all countries." One might as well make the same claim for his family, "Because I come of this family that has lived in the same place for so many years or so many centuries, therefore I am bound by its traditions; they alone are the ideal."

Things have an inner value and become real to you only when you have acquired them by the exercise of your free choice, not when they have been imposed upon you. If you want to be sure of your religion, you must choose it; if you want to be sure of your country, you must choose it; if you want to be sure of your family, even that you must choose. If you accept without question what has been given you by Chance, you can never be sure whether it is good or bad for you, whether it is the true thing for your life. Step back from

all that forms your natural environment or inheritance, made up and forced upon you by Nature's blind mechanical process; draw within and look quietly and dispassionately at things. Appraise them, choose freely. Then you can say with an inner truth, "This is my family, this my country, this my religion."

If we go a little way within ourselves, we shall discover that there is in each of us a consciousness that has been living throughout the ages and manifesting in a multitude of forms. Each of us has been born in many different countries, belonged to many different nations, followed many different religions. Why must we accept the last one as the best? The experiences gathered by us in all these many lives in different countries and varying religions, are stored up in that inner continuity of our consciousness which persists through all births. There are multiple personalities there created by these past experiences, and when we become aware of this multitude within us, it becomes impossible to speak of one particular form of truth as the only truth, one country as our only country, one religion as the only true religion. There are people who have been born into one country, although the leading elements of their consciousness obviously belong to another. I have met some born in Europe who were evidently Indians; I have met others born in Indian bodies who were as evidently Europeans. In Japan I have met some who were Indian, others who were European. And if any of them goes to the country or enters into the civilisation to which he has affinity, he finds himself there perfectly at home.

If your aim is to be free, in the freedom of the Spirit, you must get rid of all the ties that are not the inner truth of your being, but come from subconscious habits. If you wish to consecrate yourself entirely, absolutely and exclusively to the Divine, you must do it in all completeness; you must not leave bits of yourself tied here and there. You may object that it is

not easy to cut away altogether from one's moorings. But have you never looked back and observed the changes that have taken place in you in the course of a few years ? When you do that, almost always you ask yourself how it was that you could have felt in the way you felt and acted as you did act in certain circumstances; at times, even, you can no longer recognise yourself in the person you were only ten years ago. How can you then bind yourself to what was or to what is or how can you fix beforehand what may or may not be in the future ?

All your relations must be newly built upon an inner freedom of choice. The traditions in which you live or are brought up have been imposed on you by the pressure of the environment or by the general mind or by the choice of others. There is an element of compulsion in your acquiescence. Religion itself has been imposed on men; it is often supported by a suggestion of religious fear or by some spiritual or other menace. There can be no such imposition in your relation with the Divine; it must be free, your own mind's and heart's choice, taken up with enthusiasm and joy. What union can that be in which one trembles and says, "I am compelled, I cannot do otherwise" ? Truth is self-evident and has not to be imposed upon the world. It does not feel the need of being accepted by men. For it is self-existent; it does not live by what people say of it or on their adherence. But one who is founding a religion needs to have many followers. The strength and greatness of religion is adjudged by men according to the number of those that follow it, although the real greatness is not there. The greatness of spiritual truth is not in numbers. I knew the head of a new religion, the son of its founder, and heard him say once that such and such a religion took so many hundreds of years to be built up, and such another so many hundreds of years, but they within fifty years had already over four million followers. "And so you see," he added, "what a great religion is

ours !” Religions may reckon their greatness by the number of their believers, but Truth would still be Truth if it had not even a single follower. The average man is drawn towards those who make great pretensions; he does not go where Truth is quietly manifesting. Those who make great pretensions need to proclaim loudly and to advertise; for otherwise they would not attract great numbers of people. The work that is done with no care for what people think of it is not so well-known, does not so easily draw multitudes. But Truth requires no advertisement; it does not hide itself but it does not proclaim itself either. It is content to manifest, regardless of results, not seeking approbation or shunning disapprobation, not attracted or troubled by the world’s acceptance or denial.

When you come to the Yoga, you must be ready to have all your mental buildings and all your vital scaffoldings shattered to pieces. You must be prepared to be suspended in the air with nothing to support you except your faith. You will have to forget your past self and its clings altogether, to pluck it out of your consciousness and be born anew, free from every kind of bondage. Think not of what you were, but of what you aspire to be; be altogether in what you want to realise. Turn from your dead past and look straight towards the future. Your religion, country, family lie there; it is the DIVINE.

XI

"Can all physical ailments be traced to some disorder in the mind as their ultimate source ? If so, what kind of mental disorder would produce such an ailment as, for example, prickly heat or sore throat ?"

There are as many reasons for an illness as there are people who fall ill; the explanation is different in each case. If you ask me, "Why have I this ailment or that ?" I can look and tell you the reason, but there is no general rule.

The ailments of the body are not always the outcome of a mental disorder, disharmony or wrong movement. The source of the malady may be something in the mind, it may be something in the vital; or it may be something more or less purely physical, as in illnesses that arise from an outer contact. Again, the disturbance may be the result of a movement in the Yoga, and in that case too there is a multitude of possible causes.

Let us take up the illnesses that are due to Yoga; for our concern is more directly and intimately with them. Here, although no one reason can be given for any particular illness, yet we can separate them into various groups according to the nature of the causes that provoke them.

The force that comes down into one who is doing Yoga and helps him in his transformation, acts along many different lines and its results vary according to the nature that receives it and the work to be done. First of all, it hastens the transformation of all in the being that is ready to be transformed. If he is open and receptive in his mind, the mind, touched by the power of Yoga, begins to change and progress swiftly. There may be the same rapidity of change in the vital consciousness if that is ready, or even in the body. But in the body the trans-

forming power of Yoga is operative only to a certain degree; for the receptivity of the body is limited. The most material plane of the universe is still in a condition in which receptivity is mixed with a large amount of resistance. But rapid progress in one part of the being which is not followed by an equivalent progress in other parts produces a disharmony in the nature, a dislocation somewhere; and wherever or whenever this dislocation occurs, it can translate itself into an illness. The nature of the illness depends upon the nature of the dislocation. One kind of disharmony affects the mind and the disturbance it produces may lead even as far as insanity; another kind affects the body and may show itself as fever or prickly heat or any other greater or minor disorder.

On one side, the action of the forces of Yoga hastens the movement of transformation of the being in those parts that are ready to receive and respond to the power that is at work upon it. Yoga, in this way, saves time. The whole world is in a process of progressive transformation; if you take up the discipline of Yoga, you speed up in yourself this process. The work that would require years in the ordinary course, can be done by Yoga in a few days and even in a few hours. But it is your inner consciousness that obeys this accelerating impulse; for the higher parts of your being readily follow the swift and concentrated movement of Yoga and lend themselves more easily to the continuous adjustment and adaptation that it necessitates. The body, on the other hand, is ordinarily dense, inert and apathetic. And if you have in this part something that is not responsive, if there is a resistance here, the reason is that the body is incapable of moving as quickly as the rest of the being. It must take time, it must walk at its own pace as it does in ordinary life. What happens is as when grown-up people walk too fast for children who are in their company; they have to stop at times and wait till the child who

is lagging behind comes up and overtakes them. This divergence between the progress in the inner being and the inertia of the body often creates a dislocation in the system, and that manifests itself as an illness. This is why people who take up Yoga frequently begin by suffering from some physical discomfort or disorder. That need not happen if they are on their guard and careful. Or if there is a great and unusual receptivity in the body, then too they escape. But an unmixed receptivity making the physical parts closely follow the pace of the inner transformation is hardly possible, unless the body has already been prepared in the past for the processes of Yoga.

In the ordinary life of man a progressive dislocation is the rule. The mental and the vital beings of man follow as best they can the movement of the universal forces, and the stream of the world's inner transformation and evolution carries them a certain way; but the body bound to the law of the most material nature, moves very slowly. After some years, seventy or eighty, a hundred or two hundred,—and that is perhaps the maximum,—the dislocation is so serious that the outer being falls to pieces. The divergence between the demand and the answer, the increasing inability and irresponsiveness of the body, brings about the phenomenon of death. By Yoga the inner transformation that is in slow constant process in the creation is rendered more intense and rapid, but the pace of the outer transformation remains almost the same as in ordinary life. As a result, the disharmony between the inner and the outer being in one who is doing Yoga tends to be all the greater, unless precautions are taken and a protection secured that will help the body to follow the inner march as closely as possible. Even then it is the very nature of the body to hold you back. It is for this reason that to many we are obliged to say, "Do not pull, do not hurry; you must give your body time to follow." Some have to be kept back even for years and not allowed to do

much or progress far. Sometimes, to avoid the disequilibrium becomes impossible; and then you have a disturbance which varies according to the nature of the resistance and the measure of the care you have taken or your negligence. This too is the reason why each time that there is a strong movement of progress, it is almost invariably followed by a period of immobility, which seems to those who are not warned a spell of dullness and stagnation and discouragement in which all progress is stopped, and they think anxiously, "What is the matter? Am I losing time? Nothing is being done." But the truth is that it is the time needed for assimilation; a pause is made for the body to open itself more and become more receptive and approach nearer to the level attained by the inner consciousness. The parents have been walking too far ahead; they must halt so that the child left behind may run up and catch them by the hand; only then can they start again on the journey together.

Each spot of the body is symbolical of an inner movement; there is there a world of subtle correspondences. But this is a long and complex subject and we cannot enter into its details just now. The particular place in the body affected by an illness is an index to the nature of the inner disharmony that has taken place. It points to the origin, it is a sign of the cause of the ailment. It reveals too the nature of the resistance that prevents the whole being from advancing at the same high speed. It indicates the treatment and the cure. If one could perfectly understand where the mistake is, find out what has been unreceptive, open that part and put the force and the light there, it would be possible to re-establish in a moment the harmony that has been disturbed and the illness would immediately go.

The origin of an illness may be in the mind; it may be in the vital; it may be in any of the parts of the being. One and the

same illness may be due to a variety of causes; it may spring in different cases from different sources of disharmony. And there may be too an appearance of illness where there is no real illness at all. In that case, if you are sufficiently conscious, you will see that there is just a friction somewhere, some halting in the movement, and by setting it right you will be cured at once. This kind of malady has no truth in it, even when it seems to have physical effects. It is half made up of imagination and has not the same grip on matter as a true illness.

In short, the sources of an illness are manifold and intricate; each can have a multitude of causes, but always it indicates where is the weak part in the being. •

To whatever cause an illness may be due, material or mental, external or internal, it must, before it can affect the physical body, touch another layer of the being that surrounds and protects it. This subtler layer is called in different teachings by various names,—the etheric body, the nervous envelope. It is a subtle body and yet almost visible. In density something like the vibrations that you see around a very hot and steaming object, it emanates from the physical body and closely covers it. All communications with the exterior world are made through this medium, and it is this that must be invaded and penetrated first before the body can be affected. If this envelope is absolutely strong and intact, you can go into places infested with the worst of diseases, even plague and cholera, and remain quite immune. It is a perfect protection against all possible attacks of illness, so long as it is whole and entire, thoroughly consistent in its composition, its elements in faultless balance. This body is built up, on the one side, of a material basis, but rather of material conditions than of physical matter, on the other, of the vibrations of our psychological states. Peace and equanimity and confidence, faith in health, undisturbed repose and cheerfulness and bright gladness constitute

this element in it and give it strength and substance. It is a very sensitive medium with facile and quick reactions; it readily takes in all kinds of suggestions and these can rapidly change and almost remould its condition. A bad suggestion acts very strongly upon it; a good suggestion operates in the contrary sense with the same force. Depression and discouragement have a very adverse effect; they cut out holes in it, as it were, in its very stuff, render it weak and unresisting and open to hostile attacks an easy passage.

It is the action of this medium that partly explains why people often feel a spontaneous and unreasoning attraction or repulsion for each other. The first seat of these reactions is in this protecting envelope. Easily we feel attracted towards people who bring a reinforcement to our nervous envelope; we are repelled by those who disturb or hurt it. Whatever gives it a sense of expansion and comfort and ease, whatever makes it respond with a feeling of happiness and pleasure exercises on us at once an attraction; when the effect is in the contrary sense, it responds with a protecting repulsion. This movement, when two people meet, is often mutual. It is not, of course, the only cause of affinities, but it is one and a very frequent cause.

If the whole being could simultaneously advance in its progressive transformation, keeping pace with the inner march of the universe, there would be no illnesses, there would be no death. But it would have to be literally the whole being integrally from the highest planes, where it is more plastic and yields in the required measure to transforming forces, down to the most material, which is by nature rigid, stationary, refractory to any rapid remoulding change.

There are certain regions which offer a much stronger resistance than others to the action of the Yogic forces, and the illnesses affecting them are harder to cure. They are those

parts that belong to the most material layers of the being, and the illnesses that pertain to them, as, for instance, skin diseases or bad teeth. Sri Aurobindo spoke once of a Yogi who, still enjoying robust health and a magnificent physique, had been living for nearly a century on the banks of the Narmada. Offered by a disciple medicine for a toothache, he observed, in refusing, that that one tooth had given him trouble for the last two hundred years. This Yogi had secured so much control over material nature as to live two hundred years, but in all that time he had not been able to conquer a toothache.

Some of the diseases which are considered most dangerous are the easiest to cure; some that are considered as of very little importance can offer the most obstinate resistance.

The sources of an illness are manifold and intricate; each can have a multitude of causes, but always it indicates where is the weak part in the being.

Nine-tenths of the danger in an illness comes from fear. Fear can give you the apparent symptoms of an illness; and it can give you the illness too—its effects can go so far as that. Not so long ago the wife of one who frequents the Ashram but is not herself practising Yoga, heard that there was cholera in the house where her milkman lived; fear took her and the next moment she began to show the symptoms of the disease. She could however be rapidly cured, because the apparent symptoms were not allowed to develop into the real illness.

There are physical movements, effects of the pressure of the Yoga, which sometimes create ungrounded fears that may do harm if the fear is not rejected. There is, for instance, a certain pressure in the head of which there has been question and which is felt by many, especially in the earlier stages, when something that is still closed has to open. It is a discomfort that comes to nothing and can easily be got over, if

you know that it is an effect of the pressure of the forces to which you are opening, when they work strongly on the body to produce a result and to hasten the transformation. Taken quietly, it can turn into a not unpleasurable sensation. But if you get frightened, you are sure to contract a very bad headache; it may even go as far as a fever. The discomfort is due to some resistance in the nature; if you know how to release the resistance, you are immediately free of the discomfort. But get frightened and the discomfort may turn into something much worse. Whatever the character of the experience you have, you must give no room to fear; you must keep an unshaken confidence and feel that whatever happens is the thing that had to happen. Once you have chosen the path, you must boldly accept all the consequences of your choice. But if you choose and then draw back and choose again and again draw back, always wavering, always doubting, always fearful, you create a disharmony in your being, which not only retards your progress, but can be the origin of all kinds of disturbance in the mind and vital being and discomfort and disease in the body.

XII

"Can a Yogi attain to a state of consciousness in which he can know all things, answer all questions, relating even to abstract scientific problems, such as, for example, the theory of relativity?"

Theoretically and in principle it is not impossible for a Yogi to know everything; all depends upon the Yogi.

But there is knowledge and knowledge. The Yogi does not know in the way of the mind. He does not know everything in the sense that he has access to all possible information or because he contains all the facts of the universe in his mind or because his consciousness is a sort of miraculous encyclopaedia. He knows by his capacity for a containing or dynamic identity with things and persons and forces. Or he knows because he lives in a plane of consciousness or is in contact with a consciousness in which there is the truth and the knowledge.

If you are in the true consciousness, the knowledge you have will also be of the truth. Then, too, you can know directly, by being one with what you know. If a problem is put before you, if you are asked what is to be done in a particular matter, you can then, by looking with enough attention and concentration, receive spontaneously the required knowledge and the true answer. It is not by any careful application of theory that you reach the knowledge or by working it out through a mental process. The scientific mind needs these methods to come to its conclusions. But the Yogi's knowledge is direct and immediate; it is not deductive. If an engineer has to find out the exact position for the building of an arch, the line of its curve and the size of its opening, he does it by calculation, collating and deducing from his information and data. But a

Yogi needs none of these things; he looks, has the vision of the thing, sees that it is to be done in this way and not in another, and this seeing is his knowledge.

Although it may be true in a general way and in a certain sense that a Yogi can know all things and can answer all questions from his own field of vision and consciousness, yet it does not follow that there are no questions whatever of any kind to which he would not or could not answer. A Yogi who has the direct knowledge, the knowledge of the true truth of things, would not care or perhaps would find it difficult to answer questions that belong entirely to the domain of human mental constructions. It may be, he could not or would not wish to solve problems and difficulties you might put to him which touch only the illusion of things and their appearances. The working of his knowledge is not in the mind; if you put him some silly mental query of that character, he probably would not answer. The very common conception that you can put any ignorant question to him as to some super-school-master or demand from him any kind of information past, present or future and that he is bound to answer, is a foolish idea. It is as inept as the expectation from the spiritual man of feats and miracles that would satisfy the vulgar external mind and leave it gaping with wonder.

Moreover, the term "Yogi" is very vague and wide. There are many types of Yogis, many lines or ranges of spiritual or occult endeavour and different heights of achievement. There are some whose powers do not extend beyond the mental level; there are others who have gone beyond it. Everything depends on the field or nature of their effort, the height to which they have arrived, the consciousness with which they have contact or into which they enter.

"Do not scientists go sometimes beyond the mental plane? It is said that Einstein found his theory of relativity not through any process of reasoning, but through some kind of sudden inspiration. Has that inspiration anything to do with the Supermind?"

The scientist who gets an inspiration revealing to him a new truth, receives it from the intuitive mind. The knowledge comes as a direct perception in the higher mental plane illumined by some other light still farther above. But all that has nothing to do with the action of Supermind and this higher mental level is far removed from the supramental plane. Men are too easily inclined to believe that they have climbed into regions quite divine when they have only gone above the average level. There are many stages between the ordinary human mind and the Supermind, many grades and many intervening planes. If an ordinary man were to get into direct contact even with one of these intermediate planes, he would be dazzled and blinded, would be crushed under the weight of the sense of immensity or would lose his balance; and yet it is not the Supermind.

Behind the common idea that a Yogi can know all things and answer all questions is the actual fact that there is a plane in the mind where the memory of everything is stored and remains always in existence. All mental movements that belong to the life of the earth are memorised and registered in this plane. Those who are capable of going there and care to take the trouble, can read in it and learn anything they choose. But this region must not be mistaken for the supramental levels. And yet to reach even there you must be able to silence the movements of the material or physical mind; you must be able to leave aside all your sensations and put a stop to your ordinary mental movements, whatever they are; you must get out of the vital; you must become free from the

slavery of the body. Then only you can enter into that region and see. But if you are sufficiently interested to make this effort, you can arrive there and read what is written in the earth's memory.

Thus, if you go deep into silence, you can reach a level of consciousness on which it is not impossible for you to receive answers to all your questions. And if there is one who is consciously open to the plenary truth of the Supermind, in constant contact with it, he can certainly answer any question that is worth an answer from the Supramental Light. The queries put must come from some sense of the truth and reality behind things. There are many questions and much debated problems that are cobwebs woven of mere mental abstractions or move on the illusory surface of things. These do not pertain to real knowledge; they are a deformation of knowledge, their very substance is of the ignorance. Certainly the supramental knowledge may give an answer, its own answer, to the problems set by the mind's ignorance; but it is likely that it would not be at all satisfactory or perhaps even intelligible to those who ask from the mental level. You must not expect the supramental to work in the way of the mind or demand that the knowledge in truth should be capable of being pieced together with the half-knowledge in ignorance. The scheme of the mind is one thing, but Supermind, is quite another and it would no longer be supramental if it adapted itself to the exigencies of the mental scheme. The two are incommensurable and cannot be put together.

"When the consciousness has attained to supramental joys, does it no longer take interest in the things of the mind?"

The supramental does not take interest in mental things in

the same way as the mind. It takes its own interest in all the movements of the universe, but it is from a different point of view and with a different vision. The world presents to it an entirely different appearance; there is a reversal of outlook and everything is seen from there as other than what it seems to the mind and often even the opposite. Things have another meaning; their aspect, their motion and process, everything about them, are watched with other eyes. Everything here is followed by the supermind; the mind movements and not less the vital, the material movements, all the play of the universe have for it a very deep interest, but of another kind. It is about the same difference as that between the interest taken in a puppet-play by one who holds the strings and knows what the puppets are to do and the will that moves them and that they can do only what it moves them to do, and the interest taken by another who observes the play but sees only what is happening from moment to moment and knows nothing else. The one who follows the play and is outside its secret has a stronger, an eager and passionate interest in what will happen and he gives an excited attention to its unforeseen or dramatic events; the other, who holds the strings and moves the show, is unmoved and tranquil. There is a certain intensity of interest which comes from ignorance and is bound up with illusion, and that must disappear when you are out of the ignorance. The interest that human beings take in things founds itself on the illusion; if that were removed, they would have no interest at all in the play; they would find it dry and dull. That is why all this ignorance, all this illusion has lasted so long; it is because men like it, because they cling to it and its peculiar kind of appeal that it endures.

"What should one do who wants to change his bodily condition, effect a cure or correct some physical imperfection? Should he concentrate upon the end to be realized and exercise his will-power or should he only live in the confidence that it will be done or trust in the Divine Power to bring about the desired result in its own time and in its own way?" • •

All these are so many ways of doing the same thing and each in different conditions can be effective. The method by which you will be most successful depends on the consciousness you have developed and the character of the forces you are able to bring into play. You can live in the consciousness of the completed cure or change and by the force of your inner formation slowly bring about the outward change. Or if you know and have the vision of the force that is able to effect these things and if you have the skill to handle it, you can call it down and apply it in the parts where its action is needed, and it will work out the change. Or, again, you can present your difficulty to the Divine and ask of It the cure, putting confidently your trust in the Divine Power.

But whatever you do, whatever the process you use, and even if you happen to have acquired in it a great skill and power, you must leave the result in the hands of the Divine. Always you may try, but it is for the Divine to give you the fruit of your effort or not to give it. There your personal power stops; if the result comes, it is the Divine Power and not yours that brings it. You question if it is right to ask the Divine for these things. But there is no more harm in turning to the Divine for the removal of a physical imperfection than in praying for the removal of a moral defect. But whatever you ask for or whatever your effort, you must feel, even while trying your best, using knowledge or putting forth power that the result depends upon the Divine Grace. Once you have taken

up the Yoga, whatever you do must be done in a spirit of complete surrender. This must be your attitude,—“I aspire, I try to cure my imperfections, I do my best, but for the result I put myself entirely into the hands of the Divine.”

“Does it help, if you say, ‘I am sure of the result, I know that the Divine will give me what I want’ ?”

You may take it in that way. The very intensity of your faith may mean that the Divine has already chosen that the thing it points to shall be done. An unshakable faith is a sign of the presence of the Divine Will, an evidence of what shall be.

“What are the forces that are in operation when one is in silent meditation ?”

That depends upon the one who meditates.

“But in silent meditation does he not make himself a complete blank ? Then how can anything depend upon him ?”

Even if you make yourself an absolute blank, that does not change the nature of your aspiration or alter its domain. In some the aspiration moves on the mental levels or in the vital field; some have a spiritual aspiration. On the quality of the aspiration depends the force that answers and the work that it comes to do. To make yourself blank in meditation creates an inner silence; it does not mean that you have become nothing or have become a dead and inert mass. Making yourself an empty vessel, you invite that which shall fill it. It

means that you release the stress of your inner consciousness towards realisation. The nature of the consciousness and the degree of its stress determine the forces that you bring into play and whether they shall help and fulfil or fail or even harm and hinder.

There are many varying conditions in which you may meditate and all have their effect upon the forces brought in or brought down and on their working. If you sit alone, it is your own inner and outer condition that matters. If you sit with others, the general condition is of primary importance. But in either case the conditions will always vary and the forces that answer will never be twice the same. A united concentration rightly done can be a great force. There is an old saying that if twelve sincere persons unite their will and their aspiration and call the Divine, the Divine is bound to manifest. But the will must be one-pointed, the aspiration sincere. For those who make the attempt can be united in inertia or even in mistaken or perverse desire, and the result is then likely to be disastrous.

In your meditation the first imperative need is a state of perfect and absolute sincerity in all the consciousness. It is indispensable that you should not deceive yourself or deceive or be deceived by others. Often people have a wish, a mental preference or vital desire; they want the experience to happen in a particular way or to take a turn that satisfies their ideas or desires or preferences; they do not keep themselves blank and unprejudiced and simply and sincerely observe what happens. Then if you do not like what happens, it is easy to deceive yourself; you will see one thing, but give it a little twist and make it something else, or you will distort something simple and straightforward or magnify it into an extraordinary experience. When you sit in meditation you must be as candid and simple as a child, not interfering by your external mind,

expecting nothing, insisting on nothing. Once this condition is there, all the rest depends upon the aspiration deep within you. If you ask from within for peace, it will come; if for strength, for power, for knowledge, they too will come, but all in the measure of your capacity to receive it. And if you call upon the Divine, then too—always admitting that the Divine is open to your call, and that means your call is pure enough and strong enough to reach him,—you will have the answer.

XIII

"What is the ground of the repulsion that one instinctively feels towards certain animals, such as snakes and scorpions?"

It is not an inevitable necessity that one should feel this or any other repulsion. To have no repulsion at all is one of the fundamental achievements of Yoga.

The repulsion you speak of comes from fear; if there were no fear, it would not exist. This fear is not based on reason, it is instinctive; it is not individual, but racial; it is a general suggestion and belongs to the consciousness of humanity as a whole. When one takes up the human body, one accepts along with it a mass of these general suggestions, race ideas, race feelings of mankind, associations, attractions, repulsions, fears.

But from another view-point there is something very personal in the nature of an attraction or repulsion; for these movements are not the same for everybody and depend mostly on the quality of vibration of the vital being in different people. There are men who not only do not feel any repulsion for creatures like snakes, but have even a liking for them, a vital attraction and preference.

The world is full of things that are not pleasing or beautiful, but that is no reason why one should live in a constant feeling of repulsion for these things. All feelings of shrinking and disgust and fear that disturb and weaken the human mind can be overcome. A Yogi has to overcome these reactions; for almost the very first step in Yoga demands that you must keep a perfect equanimity in the presence of all beings and things and happenings. Always you must remain calm, untouched and unmoved; the strength of the Yogi lies there. An entire calmness and quietness will disarm even dangerous and ferocious animals when they confront you.

Repulsion is a movement of ignorance. It is an instinctive gesture of self-defence. But what best protects you against any danger is not an unreasoning recoil but knowledge, knowledge of the nature of the danger and a conscious application of the means that will remove or nullify it. The ignorance from which these movements rise is a general human condition, but it can be conquered; for we are not bound to the crude human nature from which the external being starts and which is all around us.

Ignorance is dispelled by a growing consciousness; what you need is consciousness and always more consciousness, a consciousness pure, simple and luminous. In the light of this perfected consciousness, things appear as they are and not as they want to appear. It is like a screen faithfully recording all things as they pass. You see there what is luminous and what is dark, what is straight and what is crooked. Your consciousness becomes a screen or mirror; but this is when you are in a state of contemplation, a mere observer; when you are active, it is like a searchlight. You have only to turn it on, if you want to see luminously and examine penetratingly anything in any place.

The way to attain to this perfect consciousness is to increase your actual consciousness beyond its present grooves and limits, to educate it, to 'open it to the Divine Light and to let the Divine Light work in it fully and freely. But the Light can do its full and unhindered work only when you have got rid of all craving and fear, when you have no mental prejudices, no vital preferences, no physical apprehensions or attractions to obscure or bind you.

Repulsion is a movement of weakness. It comes because you have been touched and hurt and recoil from what hurts you. The atmosphere of a being or man or animal or its emanations may be harmful for you, although it may not be so felt

by everybody, and directly it touches you, you shrink back from it. But if you were strong enough, you could stop the danger at a distance and not let it reach or hurt you. For you would see and know at once that there was something harmful there and put a barrier of defence around you, and, even if the thing came near, it would not be able to touch you; you would remain unhurt and unmoved by its presence.

"If the Divine that is all love is the source of the creation whence have come all the evils that abound upon earth?"

All is from the Divine; but the One Consciousness, the Supreme has not created the world directly out of itself; a Power has gone out from it and has descended through many gradations of its workings and passed through many agents. There are many creators or rather "formateurs", form-makers, who have presided over the creation of the world. They are intermediary agents and I prefer to call them "Formateurs" and not "Creators"; for what they have done is to give a form and turn and nature to matter. There have been many, and some have formed things harmonious and benignant and some have shaped things mischievous and evil. And some too have been distorters rather than builders, for they have interfered and spoiled what was begun well by others.

"Is not this material world of ours very low down in the scale in the system of worlds that form the creation?"

Ours is the most material world, but it is not necessarily "low down", at least, not for that reason; if it is low down, it is because it is obscure and ignorant, not because it is material.

It is a mistake to make "matter" a synonym for obscurity and ignorance. And the material world too is not the only world in which we live : it is rather one of many in which we exist simultaneously, and in one way the most important of them all. For this world of matter is the point of concentration of all the worlds; it is the field of concretisation of all the worlds; it is the place where all the worlds will have to manifest. At present it is disharmonious and obscure; but that is only an accident, a false start. One day it will become beautiful, rhythmic, full of light; for that is the consummation for which it was made.

XIV

“Is it possible for a Yogi to become an artist or can an artist be a Yogi ? What is the relation of Art to Yoga ?”

The two are not so antagonistic as you seem to think. There is nothing to prevent a Yogi from being an artist or an artist from being a Yogi. But when you are in Yoga, there is a profound change in the values of things, of Art as of everything else; you begin to look at Art from a very different standpoint. It is no longer the one supreme all-engrossing thing for you, no longer an end in itself. Art is a means, not an end; it is a means of expression. And the artist then ceases too to believe that the whole world turns round what he is doing or that his work is the most important thing that has ever been done. His personality counts no longer; he is an agent, a channel, his art a means of expressing his relations with the Divine. He uses it for that purpose as he might have used any other means that were part of the powers of his nature.

“But does an artist feel at all any impulse to create once he takes up Yoga ?”

Why should he not have the impulse ? He can express his relation with the Divine in the way of his art, exactly as he would in any other. If you want art to be the true and highest art, it must be the expression of a divine world brought down into this material world. All true artists have some feeling of this kind, some sense that they are intermediaries between a higher world and this physical existence. If you consider it in this light, Art is not very different from Yoga. But most often the artist has only an indefinite feeling, he has not the knowl-

edge. Still, I knew some who had it; they worked consciously at their art with the knowledge. In their creation they did not put forward their personality as the most important factor; they considered their work as an offering to the Divine, they tried to express by it their relation with the Divine.

This was the avowed function of Art in the Middle Ages. The "primitive" painters, the builders of cathedrals in Mediaeval Europe had no other conception of art. In India all her architecture, her sculpture, her painting have proceeded from this source and were inspired by this ideal. The songs of Mirabai and the music of Thyagaraja, the poetic literature built up by her devotees, saints and Rishis rank among the world's greatest artistic possessions.

"But does the work of an artist improve if he does Yoga?"

The discipline of Art has at its centre the same principle as the discipline of Yoga. In both the aim is to become more and more conscious; in both you have to learn to see and feel something that is beyond the ordinary vision and feeling, to go within and bring out from there deeper things. Painters have to follow a discipline for the growth of the consciousness of their eyes, which in itself is almost a Yoga. If they are true artists and try to see beyond and use their art for the expression of the inner world, they grow in consciousness by this concentration, which is not other than the consciousness given by Yoga. Why then should not Yogic consciousness be a help to artistic creation? I have known some who had very little training and skill and yet through Yoga acquired a fine capacity in writing and painting. Two examples I can cite to you. One was a girl who had no education whatever; she was a dancer and danced tolerably well. After she took up Yoga,

she danced only for friends; but her dancing attained a depth of expression and beauty which was not there before. And although she was not educated, she began to write wonderful things; for she had visions and expressed them in the most beautiful language. But there were ups and downs in her Yoga, and when she was in a good condition, she wrote beautifully, but otherwise was quite dull and stupid and uncreative. The second case is that of a boy who had studied art, but only just a little. The son of a diplomat, he had been trained for the diplomatic career; but he lived in luxury and his studies did not go far. Yet as soon as he took up Yoga, he began to produce inspired drawings which carried the expression of an inner knowledge and were symbolic in character; in the end he became a great artist.

"Why are artists generally irregular in their conduct and loose in character?"

When they are so, it is because they live usually in the vital plane, and the vital part in them is extremely sensitive to the forces of that world and receives from it all kinds of impressions and impulsions over which they have no controlling power. And often too they are very free in their minds and do not believe in the petty social conventions and moralities that govern the life of ordinary people. They do not feel bound by the customary rules of conduct and have not yet found an inner law that would replace them. As there is nothing to check the movements of their desire-being, they lead easily a life of liberty or license. But this does not happen with all. I lived ten years among artists and found many of them to be bourgeois to the core; they were married and settled, good fathers, good husbands, and lived up to the most strict moral

ideas of what should and what should not be done.

There is one way in which Yoga may stop the artist's productive impulse. If the origin of his art is in the vital world, once he becomes a Yogi, he will lose his inspiration, or, rather the source from which his inspiration used to come will inspire him no more, for then the vital world appears in its true light; it puts on its true value, and that value is very relative. Most of those who call themselves artists draw their inspiration from the vital world only; and it carries in it no high or great significance. But when a true artist, one who looks for his creative source to a higher world, turns to Yoga, he will find that his inspiration becomes more direct and powerful and his expression clearer and deeper. Of those who possess the true value the power of Yoga will increase the value, but from one who has only some false appearance of art even that appearance will vanish or else lose its appeal. To one earnest in Yoga, the first simple truth that strikes his opening vision is that what he does is a very relative thing in comparison with the universal manifestation, the universal movement. But an artist is usually vain and looks on himself as a highly important personage, a kind of demigod in the human world. Many artists say that if they did not believe what they do to be of a supreme importance, they would not be able to do it. But I have known some whose inspiration was from a higher world and yet they did not believe that what they did was of so immense an importance. That is nearer the spirit of true art. If a man is truly led to express himself in art, it is the way the Divine has chosen to manifest in him, and then by Yoga his art will gain and not lose. But there is all the question : is the artist appointed by the Divine or self-appointed ?

"But if one does Yoga can he rise to such heights as Shakespeare or Shelley ? There has been no such instance."

Why not ? The Mahabharata and Ramayana are certainly not inferior to anything created by Shakespeare or any other poet, and they are said to have been the work of men who were Rishis and had done Yogic *tapasyā*. The Gita which, like the Upanishads, ranks at once among the greatest literary and the greatest spiritual works, was not written by one who had no experience of Yoga. And where is the inferiority to your Milton and Shelley in the famous poems written whether in India or Persia or elsewhere by men known to be saints, Sufis, devotees ? And, then, do you know of the Yogis and their work ? Among the poets and creators can you say who were or who were not in conscious touch with the Divine ? There are some who are not officially Yogis, they are not *gurus* and have no disciples; the world does not know what they do; they are not anxious for fame and do not attract to themselves the attention of men; but they have the higher consciousness, are in touch with a Divine Power, and when they create they create from there. The best paintings in India and much of the best statuary and architecture were done by Buddhist monks who passed their lives in spiritual contemplation and practice; they did supreme artistic work, but did not care to leave their names to posterity. The chief reason why Yogis are not usually known by their art is that they do not consider their art-expression as the most important part of their life and do not put so much time and energy into it as a mere artist. And what they do does not always reach the public. How many there are who have done great things and not published them to the world !

"Have Yogis done greater dramas than Shakespeare?"

Drama is not the highest of the arts. Someone has said that drama is greater than any other art and art is greater than life. But it is not quite like that. The mistake of the artist is to believe that artistic production is something that stands by itself and for itself, independent of the rest of the world. Art as understood by these artists is like a mushroom on the wide soil of life, something casual and external, not something intimate to life; it does not reach and touch the deep and abiding realities, it does not become an intrinsic and inseparable part of existence. True art is intended to express the beautiful, but in close intimacy with the universal movement. The greatest nations and the most cultured races have always considered art as a part of life and made it subservient to life. Art was like that in Japan in its best moments; it was like that in all the best moments in the history of art. But most artists are like parasites growing on the margin of life; they do not seem to know that art should be the expression of the Divine in life and through life. In everything, everywhere, in all relations truth must be brought out in its all-embracing rhythm and every movement of life should be an expression of beauty and harmony. Skill is not art, talent is not art. Art is a living harmony and beauty that must be expressed in all the movements of existence. This manifestation of beauty and harmony is part of the Divine realisation upon earth, perhaps even its greatest part.

For, from the supramental point of view beauty and harmony are as important as any other expression of the Divine. But they should not be isolated, set up apart from all other relations, taken out from the ensemble; they should be one with the expression of life as a whole. People have the habit of saying, "Oh, it is an artist !" as if an artist should not be a man among

other men but must be an extraordinary being belonging to a class by itself, and his art too something extraordinary and apart, not to be confused with the other ordinary things of the world. The maxim, "Art for Art's sake", tries to impress and emphasise as a truth the same error. It is the same mistake as when men place in the middle of their drawing-rooms a framed picture that has nothing to do either with the furniture or the walls, but is put there only because it is an "object of art".

True art is a whole and an ensemble; it is one and of one piece with life. You see something of this intimate wholeness in ancient Greece and ancient Egypt; for there pictures and statues and all objects of art were made and arranged as part of the architectural plan of a building, each detail a portion of the whole. It is like that in Japan, or at least it was so till the other day before the invasion of a utilitarian and practical modernism. A Japanese house is a wonderful artistic whole; always the right thing is there in the right place, nothing wrongly set, nothing too much, nothing too little. Everything is just as it needed to be, and the house itself blends marvellously with the surrounding nature. In India, too, painting and sculpture and architecture were one integral beauty, one single movement of adoration of the Divine.

There has been in this sense a great degeneration since then in the world. From the time of Victoria and in France from the Second Empire we have entered into a period of decadence. The habit has grown of hanging up in rooms pictures that have no meaning for the surrounding objects; any picture, any artistic object could now be put anywhere and it would make small difference. Art now is meant to show skill and cleverness and talent, not to embody some integral expression of harmony and beauty in a home.

But latterly there has come about a revolt against this lapse

into bourgeois taste. The reaction was so violent that it looked like a complete aberration and art seemed about to sink down into the absurd. Slowly, however, out of the chaos something has emerged, something more rational, more logical, more coherent to which can once more be given the name of art, an art renovated and perhaps, or let us hope so, regenerated.

Art is nothing less in its fundamental truth than the aspect of beauty of the Divine manifestation. Perhaps, looking from this standpoint, there will be found very few true artists; but still there are some and these can very well be considered as Yogis. For like a Yogi an artist goes into deep contemplation to await and receive his inspiration. To create something truly beautiful, he has first to see it within, to realise it as a whole in his inner consciousness; only when so found, seen, held within, can he execute it outwardly; he creates according to this greater inner vision. This too is a kind of Yogic discipline, for by it he enters into intimate communion with the inner worlds. A man like Leonardo da Vinci was a Yogi and nothing else. And he was, if not the greatest, at least one of the greatest painters,—although his art did not stop at painting alone.

Music too is an essentially spiritual art and has always been associated with religious feeling and an inner life. But, here too, we have turned it into something independent and self-sufficient, a mushroom art, such as is operatic music. Most of the artistic productions we come across are of this kind and at best interesting from the point of view of technique. I do not say that even operatic music cannot be used as a medium of a higher art expression; for whatever the form, it can be made to serve a deeper purpose. All depends on the thing itself, on how it is used, on what is behind it. There is nothing that cannot be used for the Divine purpose—just as anything can pretend to be the Divine and yet be of the mushroom species.

Among the great modern musicians there have been several whose consciousness, when they created, came into touch with a higher consciousness. Cesar Franck played on the organ as one inspired; he had an opening into the psychic life and he was conscious of it and to a great extent expressed it. Beethoven, when he composed the Ninth Symphony, had the vision of an opening into a higher world and of the descent of a higher world into this earthly plane. Wagner had strong and powerful intimations of the occult world; he had the instinct of occultism and the sense of the occult and through it he received his greatest inspirations. But he worked mainly on the vital level and his mind came in constantly to interfere and mechanised his inspiration. His work for the greater part is too mixed, too often obscure and heavy, although powerful. But when he could cross the vital and the mental levels and reach a higher world, some of the glimpses he had were of an exceptional beauty, as in Parsifal, in some parts of Tristan and Iseult and most in its last great Act.

Look again at what the moderns have made of the dance; compare it with what the dance once was. The dance was once one of the highest expressions of the inner life; it was associated with religion and it was an important limb in sacred ceremony, in the celebration of festivals, in the adoration of the Divine. In some countries it reached a very high degree of beauty and an extraordinary perfection. In Japan they kept up the tradition of the dance as a part of the religious life and, because the strict sense of beauty and art is a natural possession of the Japanese, they did not allow it to degenerate into something of lesser significance and smaller purpose. It was the same in India. It is true that in our days there have been attempts to resuscitate the ancient Greek and other dances; but the religious sense is missing in all

such resurrections and they look more like rhythmic gymnastics than dance.

Today Russian dances are famous, but they are expressions of the vital world and there is even something terribly vital in them. Like all that comes to us from that world, they may be very attractive or very repulsive, but always they stand for themselves and not for the expression of the higher life. The very mysticism of the Russians is of a vital order. As technicians of the dance they are marvellous; but technique is only an instrument. If your instrument is good, so much the better, but so long as it is not surrendered to the Divine, however fine it may be, it is empty of the highest and cannot serve a divine purpose. The difficulty is that most of those who become artists believe that they stand on their own legs and have no need to turn to the Divine. It is a great pity; for in the divine manifestation skill is as useful an element as anything else. Skill is one part of the divine fabric, only it must know how to subordinate itself to greater things.

There is a domain far above the mind which we could call the world of Harmony and, if you can reach there, you will find the root of all harmony that has been manifested in whatever form upon earth. For instance, there is a certain line of music, consisting of a few supreme notes, that was behind the productions of two artists who came one after another—one a concerto of Bach, another a concerto of Beethoven. The two are not alike on paper and differ to the outward ear, but in their essence they are the same. One and the same vibration of consciousness, one wave of significant harmony touched both these artists. Beethoven caught a larger part, but in him it was more mixed with the inventions and interpolations of his mind; Bach received less, but what he seized of it was purer. The vibration was that of the victorious emergence of consciousness, consciousness tearing itself out of the womb

of unconsciousness in a triumphant uprising and birth.

If by Yoga you are capable of reaching this source of all art, then you are master, if you will, of all the arts. Those that may have gone there before, found it perhaps happier, more pleasant or full of a rapturous ease to remain and enjoy the Beauty and the Delight that are there, not manifesting it, not embodying it upon earth. But this abstention is not all the truth nor the true truth of Yoga; it is rather a deformation, a diminution of the dynamic freedom of Yoga by the more negative spirit of Sannyasa. The will of the Divine is to manifest, not to remain altogether withdrawn in inactivity and an absolute silence; if the Divine Consciousness were really an inaction of unmanifesting bliss, there would never have been any creation.

XV

"Is not surrender the same as sacrifice?"

In our Yoga there is no room for sacrifice. But everything depends on the meaning you put on the word. In its pure sense it means a consecrated giving, a making sacred to the Divine. But in the significance that it now bears, sacrifice is something that works for destruction; it carries about it an atmosphere of negation. This kind of sacrifice is not fulfilment; it is a deprivation, a self-immolation. It is your possibilities that you sacrifice, the possibilities and realisations of your personality from the most material to the highest spiritual range. Sacrifice diminishes your being. If physically you sacrifice your life, your body, you give up all your possibilities on the material plane; you have done with the achievements of your earthly existence. In the same way you can morally sacrifice your life; you give up the amplitude and free fulfilment of your inner existence. There is always in this idea of self-immolation a sense of forcing, a constriction, an imposed self-denial. This is an ideal that does not give room for the soul's deeper and larger spontaneities. By surrender we mean not this but a spontaneous self-giving, a giving of all your self to the Divine, to a greater Consciousness of which you are a part. Surrender will not diminish, but increase you; it will not lessen or weaken or destroy your personality, it will fortify and aggrandise it. Surrender means a free total giving with all the delight of the giving; there is no sense of sacrifice in it. If you have the slightest feeling that you are making a sacrifice, then it is no longer surrender. For it means that you reserve yourself or that you are trying to give, with grudging or with pain and effort, and have not the joy of the gift, perhaps not even the feeling that you are giving.

When you do anything with the sense of a compression of your being, be sure that you are doing it in the wrong way. True surrender enlarges you; it increases your capacity; it gives you a greater measure in quality and in quantity which you could not have had by yourself. This new greater measure of quality and quantity is different from anything you could attain before : you enter into another world, into a wideness which you could not have entered if you did not surrender. It is as when a drop of water falls into the sea; if it still kept there its separate identity, it would remain a little drop of water and nothing more, a little drop crushed by all the immensity around, because it has not surrendered. But, surrendering, it unites with the sea and participates in the nature and power and vastness of the whole sea.

There is no ambiguity or vagueness in the movement, it is clear and strong and definite. If a small human mind stands in front of the Divine Universal Mind and clings to its separateness, it will remain what it is, a small bounded thing, incapable of knowing the nature of the higher reality or even of coming in contact with it. The two continue to stand apart and are, qualitatively as well as quantitatively, quite different from each other. But if the little human mind surrenders, it will be merged in the Divine Universal Mind; it will be one in quality and quantity with it; losing nothing but its own limitations and deformations, it will receive from it its vastness and luminous clearness. The small existence will change its nature; it will put on the nature of the greater truth to which it surrenders. But if it resists and fights, if it revolts against the Universal Mind, then a conflict and pressure are inevitable in which what is weak and small cannot fail to be drawn into that power and immensity. If it does not surrender, its only other possible fate is absorption and extinction. A human being, who comes into contact with the Divine Mind and

surrenders, will find that his own mind begins at once to be purified of its obscurities and to share in the power and the knowledge of the Divine Universal Mind. If he stands in front, but separated, without any contact, he will remain what he is, a little drop of water in the measureless vastness. If he revolts, he will lose his mind; its powers will diminish and disappear. And what is true of the mind is true of all the other parts of the nature. It is as when you fight against one who is too strong for you—a broken head is all you gain. How can you fight something that is a million times stronger? Each time you revolt, you get a knock, and each blow takes away a portion of your strength, as when one who engages in a pugilistic encounter with a far superior rival receives blow after blow and each blow makes him weaker and weaker till he is knocked out. There is no necessity of a willed intervention, the action is automatic. Nothing else can happen if you dash yourself in revolt against the Immensity. As long as you remain in your corner and follow the course of the ordinary life, you are not touched or hurt; but once you come in contact with the Divine, there are only two ways open to you. You surrender and merge in it, and your surrender enlarges and glorifies you; or you revolt and all your possibilities are destroyed and your powers ebb away and are drawn from you into That which you oppose.

There are many wrong ideas current about surrender. Most people seem to look upon surrender as an abdication of the personality; but that is a grievous error. For the individual is meant to manifest one aspect of the Divine Consciousness, and the expression of its characteristic nature is what creates his personality; then, by taking the right attitude towards the Divine, this personality is purified of all the influences of the lower nature which diminish and distort it and it becomes more strongly personal, more itself, more complete. The truth and

power of the personality come out with a more resplendent distinctness, its character is more precisely marked than it could possibly be when mixed with all the obscurity and ignorance, all the dirt and alloy of the lower nature. It undergoes a heightening and glorification, an aggrandisement of capacity, a realisation of the maximum of its possibilities. But to have this sublimating change, he must first give up all that, by distorting, limiting and obscuring the true nature, fetters and debases and disfigures the true personality; he must throw from him whatever belongs to the ignorant lower movements of the ordinary man and his blind limping ordinary life. And first of all he must give up his desires; for desire, is the most obscure and the most obscuring movement of the lower nature. Desires are motions of weakness and ignorance and they keep you chained to your weakness and to your ignorance. Men have the impression that their desires are born within; they feel as if they come out of themselves or arise within themselves; but it is a false impression. Desires are waves of the vast sea of the obscure lower nature and they pass from one person to another. Men do not generate a desire in themselves, but are invaded by these waves; whoever is open and without defence is caught in them and tossed about. Desire by engrossing and possessing him makes him incapable of any discrimination and gives him the impression that it is part of his nature to manifest it. In reality, it has nothing to do with his true nature. It is the same with all the lower impulses, jealousy or envy, hatred or violence. These too are movements that seize you, waves that overwhelm and invade; they deform, they do not belong to the true character or the true nature; they are no intrinsic or inseparable part of yourself, but come out of the sea of surrounding obscurity in which move the forces of the lower nature. These desires, these passions have no personality, there is nothing

in them or their action that is peculiar to you; they manifest in the same way in everyone. The obscure movements of the mind too, the doubts and errors and difficulties that cloud the personality and diminish its expansion and fulfilment, come from the same source. They are passing waves and they catch anyone who is ready to be caught and utilised as their blind instrument. And yet each goes on believing that these movements are part of himself and a precious product of his own free personality. Even we find people clinging to them and their disabilities as the very sign or essence of what they call their freedom.

. If you have understood this, you will be ready to understand the difference, the great difference between spirituality and morality, two things that are constantly confused with each other. The spiritual life, the life of yoga, has for its object to grow into the divine consciousness and for its result to purify, intensify, glorify and perfect what is in you. It makes you a power for manifesting of the Divine; it raises the character of each personality to its full value and brings it to its maximum expression; for this is part of the Divine plan. Morality proceeds by a mental construction and, with a few ideas of what is good and what is not, sets up an ideal type into which all must force themselves. This moral ideal differs in its constituents and its ensemble at different times and different places. And yet it proclaims itself as a unique type, a categorical absolute; it admits of none other outside itself; it does not even admit a variation within itself. All are to be moulded according to its single ideal pattern, everybody is to be made uniformly and faultlessly the same. It is because morality is of this rigid unreal nature that it is in its principle and its working the contrary of the spiritual life. The spiritual life reveals the one essence in all, but reveals too its infinite diversity; it works for diversity in oneness and for perfection in that

diversity. Morality lifts up one artificial standard contrary to the variety of life and the freedom of the spirit. Creating something mental, fixed and limited, it asks all to conform to it. All must labour to acquire the same qualities and the same ideal nature. Morality is not divine or of the Divine; it is of man and human. Morality takes for its basic element a fixed division into the good and the bad; but this is an arbitrary notion. It takes things that are relative and tries to impose them as absolutes; for this good and this bad differ in differing climates and times, epochs and countries. The moral notion goes so far as to say that there are good desires and bad desires and calls on you to accept the one and reject the other. But the spiritual life demands that you should reject desire altogether. Its law is that you must cast aside all movements that draw you away from the Divine. You must reject them, not because they are bad in themselves,—for they may be good for another man or in another sphere,—but because they belong to the impulses or forces that, being unilluminated and ignorant, stand in the way of your approach to the Divine. All desires, whether good or bad, come within this description; for desire itself arises from an unilluminated vital being and its ignorance. On the other hand you must accept all movements that bring you into contact with the Divine. But you accept them, not because they are good in themselves, but because they bring you to the Divine. Accept then all that takes you to the Divine, reject all that takes you away from it, but do not say that this is good and that is bad or try to impose your outlook on others; for, what you term bad may be the very thing that is good for your neighbour who is not trying to realise the Divine Life.

Let us take an illustration of the difference between the moral and the spiritual view of things. The ordinary social notions distinguish between two classes of men,—the

generous, the avaricious. The avaricious man is despised and blamed, while the generous man is considered unselfish and useful to society and praised for his virtue. But to the spiritual vision, they both stand on the same level; the generosity of the one, the avarice of the other are deformations of a higher truth, a greater divine power. There is a power, a divine movement that spreads, diffuses, throws out freely forces and things and whatever else it possesses on all the levels of nature from the most material to the most spiritual plane. Behind the generous man and his generosity is a soul-type that expresses this movement; he is a power for diffusion, for wide distribution. There is another power, another divine movement that collects and amasses; it gathers and accumulates forces and things and all possible possessions, whether of the lower or of the higher planes. The man you tax with avarice was meant to be an instrument of this movement. Both are important, both needed in the entire plan; the movement that stores up and concentrates is no less needed than the movement that spreads and diffuses. Both, if truly surrendered to the Divine, will be utilised as instruments for its divine work to the same degree and with an equal value. But when they are not surrendered, both are alike moved by impulses of ignorance. One is pushed to throw away, the other is pulled towards keeping back; but both are driven by forces obscure to their own consciousness, and between the two there is little to choose. One could say to the much-praised generous man, from the higher point of vision of Yoga, "All your impulses of generosity are nothing in the values of the spirit, for they come from ego and ignorant desire." And, on the other hand, among those who are accused of avarice, you can see sometimes a man amassing and hoarding, full of a quiet and concentrated determination in the work assigned to him by his nature, who, once awakened, would make a very

good instrument of the Divine. But ordinarily the avaricious man acts from ego and desire like his opposite; it is the other end of the same ignorance. Both will have to purify themselves and change before they can make contact with the something higher that is behind them and express it in the way to which they are called by their nature.

In the same way you could take all other types and trace them to some original intention in the Divine Force. Each is a diminution or caricature of the type intended by the Divine, a mental and vital distortion of things that have a greater spiritual value. It is a wrong movement that creates the distortion or the caricature. Once this false impulsion is mastered, the right attitude taken, the right movement found, all reveal their divine values. All are justified by the truth that is in them, all equally important, equally needed, different but indispensable instruments of the Divine Manifestation.

